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Dante

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DANTE'S INFERNO

A Lineal and Rhymed Translation

by

REV. ALBERT R. BANDINI

THE PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING CO.
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1928

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PREFACE

A NEW translation of Dante may be considered simply an individual tour-de-force having a limited appeal to the public in general and even to the students of Dante. The fact that this is made by an Italian, a Florentine, by birth, may stir a certain curiosity not unmixed, however, with added suspicion. Of course, if I did not feel that this translation, the first volume of which is now published, is a little better than others of the same kind I would not have any justification in presenting it to the public; but, on the other hand, such a feeling might be only induced by presumption.

As I consider the finished volume, I am more poignantly aware of its deficiencies: awkward constructions here and there, some obsolete words, rhymes far from perfect—occasionally—some deviations from the sense of the original text; and above all, the failure, frequently enough, in rendering the Dantesque precision and intensity. I may demur to such charges by stating that these are inevitable shortcomings in a work of this kind; whether they destroy

altogether the value of the work—if it has to be said—I leave to others to say.

However, I am not advancing apologies: I would rather state, so that whatever criticism is called for by this work may be properly directed, that such as it is, it is the result of unaided efforts. I have hardly consulted other translations, especially the rhymed ones; suggestions from other students I have had opportunity to use but in rare cases; and finally all the work on the Inferno has been done in little less than two years, amidst many other occupations. I hope, if God gives me strength, to finish the Comedia in the same relative time.

The Biographical Sketch, sober and scholarly, I owe to Mr. Matthew J. Dooley of St. Mary's College, Oakland.

I am indebted to Mr. William Torchia, a San Francisco Journalist, for much help in attending to the details of this publication.

ALBERT R. BANDINI

Cotati, Calif., July, 1928.

INTRODUCTION

DANTE'S MESSAGE TO THE MODERNS

I FIND myself in a seaside cottage when finally ready to arrange on paper some long mulled thoughts on Dante and his Comedy; before me the old trusty portable, upon which a feeble electric bulb throws a meditative glimmer. Framing the silence of the lonely evening I hear outside the mighty roar of the Pacific along the endless shore line. I am indeed too close to it to say that I hear it; rather, I am softly but inescapably enveloped by the tremendous sound, subdued though it is by the immensity of the space through which are spread its reverberations. I feel quite humble, and the flimsy smallness of my immediate surroundings seems to enhance that feeling; thus equally humble I feel in thinking of Dante's Divine Comedy which also is a sort of ocean enveloping the world of human thought and which makes its own deep pulsations imperatively audible to anyone who is sensitive to intellectual life.

For the poem of Dante is not merely a lyrical torrent, nor an epic river, nor a poem mystical as a mountain lake, but truly an ocean or, better still, a cosmos. I believe that the Comedy's appeal is primarily that of its immensity. As small bodies are attracted by the larger bodies, thus the average small mind is attracted by the

vaster mind. The Comedy is immense not merely on account of its size; there are other cycles of prose and poetry of greater length, but the Comedy is the biggest organized and unified literary monument, every line in it being not only a part of the whole but an indispensable part. It is so exactingly planned that not a line could be taken from it without leaving a gap. It is so big that it could not grow any more: not even Dante could add another canto to it. Shakespeare could have written another play, Milton could have omitted one canto, but the Comedy, unlike any other work of literature, evolves an anticipated plan so detailed and iron bound that one would think the last line of the poem to have been in the author's mind when the first line was written. Every part of the work is so closely interrelated that the vastness of its material size is overshadowed by the vastness of its conception.

Astounding labor has hammered out every line: each stanza is prosodically and, almost always, ideologically complete in itself, selfstanding—but firmly cemented to the preceding and to the following one by the overlapping "terza rima". The rhyme not only gives the sense of a tremendous difficulty felicitously conquered, not only has the charm of a recurring echo filling the poem with large musical phrases, but gives also the sense of finality, of unchangeable perfection. That is why blank verse, or other poetical forms in which translations of the Comedy have been attempted reproduce but inadequately its aesthetic effect; blank verse especially loosens and spreads out what Dante has forged in a pitiless mold.

The Comedy is impressive like a great historical fact: one cannot ignore or escape it. I may compare it also to some of those majestic, sheer flanked buttes rising from our western plains and clearly visible at great distances. At the same time, the Comedy possesses the attraction of the unattainable. For it is the condition of all the supreme works of man and of all the greatest things in nature that no one can explore them fully.

Still, to attract does not always mean to hold; people might desire some knowledge of the Comedy merely in the spirit of tourists who visit certain notable places simply to say that they have been there. We cannot expect, for instance, that the works of Thomas Aquinas will ever appeal to anybody else but scholars and specialists, and yet they contain a thought power as dazzling as that of Dante. There must be in the Comedy a "human interest" and a literary beauty consistent and pervading the whole. This has been denied by many critics, even in Italy. Anyone, of course, would appreciate certain of its episodes, certain "bravura" pieces whose impact is immediate and overwhelming, and so the "Comedy" has been called "a venerable old pile" in which forsooth a well preserved arch or spire is still worthy of admiration, and others have talked of "insoluble rocks of prose", and Croce draws attention to "the poems or groups of poems contained in the Divine Comedy". Admittedly it has passages which are not poetical if the subject matter is considered but even the stanzas barest of that imaginative or emotional quality which is usually associated with poetry are invested with a nobility of style that raises them to a higher level than prose. Dante's lean, vivid, intense style is consistently equal to itself throughout the Comedy and the rugged surface of the so-called "rocks" is frequently enough relieved by the appearance of a pithy simile, like a rare flower that has burst through. No comparisons are here possible: Dante's style is simply Dantesque.

Besides, the spell of the Comedy's central conception is ever present. The Florentine exile has traveled beyond this world to a place where men's souls are severed from all the world's deceptions. He tears up all cloaks and all masks and leaves the souls stripped, as it were, by some irresistible sartor desartus, of all their make-up: crowns, pastorals, cuirasses, purple mantles and rags are thrown away.

It must be of course conceded that outside Italy Dante can-

not be exactly what is called a "popular" poet. This partly because every nation has its own literary heroes, partly because no translation can be as effective as the original, partly because only well educated people may be expected to possess a sufficient knowledge of the background, historical and otherwise, so as to render the reading of the Comedy a pleasurably easy matter. In Italy it is known with astonishing thoroughness by peasants and washer-women; D'Annunzio speaks of meeting a Maremman cow-boy who during a pause in his wild labors had devoutly taken out "his Dante". I have myself met in San Francisco a humble Italian window-cleaner who knows by heart perhaps more of Dante than I know myself, and when I was congratulating him, he told me: "You ought to meet my friend Jack: he knows all of it"—Jack is a stable-boy somewhere on a big ranch. Let us not forget that Dante did not write for the learned, though the learned have tried afterwards to monopolize him and to hedge his work with forbidding erudition. Dante wrote in the language and, substantially, for the comprehension of humble folks who could easily follow the "literal" sense of the poem even though its complexities and its inner meanings may have escaped them.

To its first readers or hearers the Comedy was not unlike one of our modern most "gripping" novels. It was an Utopian Romance, somewhat like those of our Mr. Wells that also have achieved considerable popularity; only, Mr. Wells is concerned with social and terrestrial Utopias, while Dante was interested in a spiritual and escatological Utopia. But Dante's simple readers, in the XIII as well as in the XX century did not and do not care overmuch for any snug arrangement of terrestrial matters; the soul's final fate and the eternal revelation of the justice of God was and is to them a much more exciting subject.

Naturally, few among modern readers, especially outside Italy, can find in the Comedy that "suspense" and that breathless wonder which the mere tale of Dante's adventures in the worlds beyond

aroused in his contemporaries, but other treasures of intellectual enjoyment the Comedy offers to the modern mind, besides its qualities of formal excellence.

Even these, of course, are inexhaustible: all works of genius are self-renewing veins of beauty and the pick labor of commentators and expounders extracts but a part of their precious metal. This is especially true as to the deepest reaches of the Comedy in what has to do with the interpretation of the poem and the correlation of its parts. Every new student has before himself the pleasure of discovery. In fact, after so many centuries and such enormous critical work, our own times have produced some very original Dante scholars. Not all the new interpretations are quite important or acceptable but their possibility indicates the well nigh unfathomable depths of the Comedy: and I refer here not only to clever suggestions as to the meaning of some doubtful passage but to elaborate systems about the major significances and the more subtle harmonies of the Poem.

However, all that I have said so far does not explain Dante and it explains much less why he becomes more and more a Mentor to the present age. His power might be expressed in a familiar phrase, no less mysterious because we think we know what it means: the power of personality.

Very often a literary artist is negligible or despicable as a thinker, perhaps even oftener the artist is superior to the man. In Dante, the artist, the man and the thinker are blended and unified; his keenness as a thinker, his excellence as an artist and his character as a man are at the same level. His personality is a Trilogy, resultant of Wisdom, Art and Moral Strength.

Perhaps the man Dante is somewhat legendary; at least not at all stages of his mature life he was the stern personage that we know from Giotto's fresco. But in our mind his image is fixed with the traits developed by the full blossoming of his genius. His physical features are fixed no less sharply than his spiritual

figure: the deep set eyes as from long intent gazing, the aquiline nose which seems to indicate an inflexible purpose, the strong jaw as a mark of a character indomitable, the tight, thin mouth of one who shuns idle words, the lower lip protruding as if in disdain of the world. The qualities of his soul seem to shine forth from his very physical traits, almost as if the painter had reconstructed his appearance from the spiritual qualities that emerge from his work, and posterity had accepted that concordance as proof of authenticity.

This man is obviously secure of himself and secure of his cosmos; above all he had a clear vision of what is right and what is wrong and of the deserts of either. Like Minos, he knows the depth of every sin; there is nothing blurred in his conceptions, no provisional hypothesis. Whatever he knows, he knows it with a knowledge that is final. He has planned a social and political order and connected it with the institutions of religion; all this is to him foreordained and inevitable though the perversity of man delays its realization. Yet, while unshakable in his conception of an orderly Christian society, he is still firmer in holding to the truths of revealed religion and the limits of orthodoxy are for him the limits of intelligence.

One feels also that he has the capacity to suffer unendingly for any of his ideals.

And withal he is a free man; there is in him, coexisting with a profound respect toward legitimate authority, a spirit of scornful defiance toward all tyrants or unworthy rulers.

A man, finally, of whom we feel that it could be said: "Thou art a Rock"; and yet this man is capable of tremendous emotional upheavals, though he is master of himself—not only upheavals of just wrath but storms of violent love: love of truth and of justice and of knowledge and of God, a love that does not lose its power in becoming a most tender affection for a friend or a mystical exhaltation for a woman.

This sort of man is the High Priest speaking from within the temple of the Divine Comedy and whose message we are anxious to hear.

As once the Poet, we find ourselves today "wandered astray from the right path" not because a forest dark is around us but because we have illumined our life with so many contrasting lights that we are as bewildered as if moving in the darkest of nights. We are trying to find again a starting point and a path of righteousness. We begin to think that after all the past has something to say to us, that it has not been merely a series of attempts and mistakes. Perhaps the mistakes and the useless attempts are ours and some of us are beginning to tire of poets who measure their lines to suit themselves because their little ideas look prettier in that fancy setting, and of philosophers who measure life to suit themselves because their petty theories look somewhat decent within that artificial framework. We are tired of experimenting, of building scaffolds after scaffolds around the proposed structure of Truth which is never started because we are too busy remodeling the scaffolds. We are sick of a science that grows more tentative and hesitating every day; it achieves great conquests but the more it knows the more it doubts, the more power of expansion it gives man the more it makes him shrink in his own estimation. We are disgusted with all that is small, uncertain, irresolute, skeptical, agnostic, indefinite, tentative and temporary; disgusted perhaps even with freedom, at least with that brand of it which is supposed to heal the wounds it produces. To all this Dante is the reproach and the remedy.

And so we look back: the Age of Machines looks back to the Age of the Spirit, the spirit that moving bare hands produced things everlasting. We have found out that, after all, the famous "ten mute centuries" were quite vocal and resonant: with the voice of teachers in the halls of cloisters and universities, with the toil of the building arts, with the prayers of Saints, with the battle

cry of Crusaders, though we admit that above all this sounds the voice of Dante the Poet.

In the Middle Ages Christendom was organized and Dante had a vision of even a more unified and permanent order. There were castes, but largely fluid: the individual knew his boundaries but also how to cross them. There were institutions that might in some way be a pattern for our so different social milieu, but, upon the whole, it would be idle to expect from Medieval Christianity or from Dante a practical program for the solution of our social difficulties. Rather, we may learn from those sources an attitude, we may gather an inspiration, we may get a glimpse of principles to be then applied to suit our present need. As any steel machinery thus the social machinery needs a "film of protection" to reduce the friction of its parts. There were dreadful clashes in those times, but not without a softening intervention, there were hideous wounds but not without a ready balm. In other words, Christian Faith and Charity worked efficiently for social justice and happiness.

What we really want to-day is not systems; we have already all kinds of systems. Our need is rather of individuals that will fit in some system: society is dislocated just because the individuals will not fit. The only way to make individuals into social units is to release them from their frame of hedonism and to re-shape them within the mold of spirituality. Dante, in his Comedy, can be our Spiritual Master.

I am far from condemning our contemporaries en bloc; in the social turmoil there is at present clearly discernible, at least in America, a vast effort to enlarge one's mental potentiality, which is not yet an effort toward spirituality but may easily be turned in that direction. There is something pathetic and yet indicating a significant "will to grow" in the response of the public to the ludicrous offers of psychology quacks, of educational shortcuts, of alluring devices for the betterment of human body and mind—

these efforts toward enlarged personality and power are perhaps manifestations of a wide spread groping toward the light, and those who apparently seek merely "to rise in the world" are really desirous of a spiritual ascent. To them Dante will show the true ascensional path of man: through sorrow, in his Hell, through expiation, in his Purgatory until enlightenment is reached, in his Paradise.

It must be noted that in our present time materialism in not in honor but many people who would resent being charged with it, have no clear notion of what is opposite to it. They flatter themselves as if standing on an eminent plane of life because they appreciate music, even if it is only via the radio, or literature, even through best sellers, or art, though only through chromos or plasterworks, and above all on account of their proclaiming that often mouthed principle of "service" which perhaps exhausts itself in furnishing a Christmas dinner to possibly deserving poor (deserving at least a meal every day), in providing an annual outing for newsboys or some such social activities. These people have an idea that in this manner they are pursuing the "higher things" and that they are therefore immune from the charge of materialism. It does not occur to them that they are only pursuing some material things perhaps a bit more refined than what the crass horde might indulge in, but true spiritualism—as opposed to materialism—has to do not merely with refined material things, nor even with things somewhat spiritual: it has to do with the soul.

Now, Dante's poem is the epic of the human soul; it is based on the reality of the spirit world, in fact on the assumption that the spirit world is the ultimate reality. There, a "ghost" is a being of flesh and bone. That is why in the Comedy one feels the Presence of the Soul in a manner more emphatic and imminent than in any other literary work: even the Bible permits us often enough to remain on the earth inhabited by the children of men.

Dante, the solid "ghost" who journeys through the places of

real souls is the type of humanity seeking its own highest level which may be found on the plateau of truth. All seekers after spiritual values are therefore travel companions of Dante, and beginning to share with him the sense of the Presence of the Soul—like a sense of orientation—they come to share his sense of the Presence of God—like a sense of being at home.

The Comedy is a book of meditation: on the last things of the world which are the only lasting things. I do not say that one cannot take it up merely for its aesthetic values, but seldom will one continue to study it for that reason alone because the Comedy is vitalized by a "form of life"—of spiritual life—which is communicative. One comes to admire and remains to pray. Like a heavy electric charge, its inner fire burns the insulation of materialism and thrills one with a new vigor of mental life.

A form of spiritual life is a "faith", organic, reaching to the roots of our being and driving its sap into all limbs and leaves. A great many people to-day lack such a faith, but many are looking for it. Nor does it make any difference—in fact that is the supreme power of Dante's spiritual influence—that his is the Catholic faith. On this point our consideration in vital. Symonds has said: "Whatever is medieval and catholic in Dante may be well put away except for antiquarian and artistic interest". But he has said also: "Dante incarnates the spirit of medieval Christianity." It is seldom that an artist can be separated from his age and, in Dante's case he could not be very well the representative of medieval Christianity if this were merely a removable background to his figure. I wonder what is meant by the expression "medieval Christianity"—whether it is understood as a reproach or at least as a limitation. Perhaps it is merely another way of saying "Catholicism" and Dante is of course Catholic: indeed he could be nothing else. His power would be shorn from him were he anything else but the Poet of the Church.

The Church might have fulfilled her mission without her Poet, proud enough of her many poets; it seems fitting that to this

supreme human organization the mightiest minds should have dedicated their power, and that among them should not have been missing the Singer. With the gifts from above to the faithful, as enumerated by Saint Paul, the "grace of poetry" is not mentioned, yet this might be a combination of the gift of prophecy with the gift of tongues. I am not juggling words: I know that there is a distinction between supernatural gifts and even the highest inspiration of poetical genius, but this too, in the end, is a manifestation of divine afflatus. At any rate the coming of Dante to the Church was so opportune and timely that he appears if not as an historical necessity, at least as an historical desideratum. After the Crusades, after Saint Louis, after Saint Thomas, Saint Francis and Saint Dominic, Dante the Poet—after the cathedrals of stone, the cathedral of words. The Poet is at the apex of civilization.. As a string must be taut to a certain point before it gives a musical sound, thus civilization must have reached a certain expansion before it produces its Singer.

In the last few paragraphs I have spoken of "the Church"; there is a growing tendency these days, even in America, to speak of the Church and to mean the Catholic Church. The fact that Dante belongs to "the Church" has not kept anyone away from him; as a matter of fact the foremost Dante scholars, in this country, have been Protestants, but now as the Catholic Church affirms herself with growing force, her Poet should appeal to an ever larger number of people.

I like to think of Dante as a gigantic catholic force: in this perhaps consists his supreme gift to humanity.

Dante means "The Giver".

And the name is a contraction of "Durante"; which means "The Enduring one": it is a fanciful application, yet his name is prophetic: he is "the Enduring Giver".

ALBERT R. BANDINI

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

DISCORD was rife in Florence during the thirteenth century. Fierce implacable party strife kept the city in a constant turmoil. Her streets were the battle grounds, her houses the ramparts, her citizens the warriors in the violent struggles among the Guelfs and the Ghibellins, the Cerchi and Donati, the Whites and the Blacks. Yet, while in the throes of these savage conflicts, Florence was the birthplace of one of the world's greatest apostles of peace, of order and of love.

In this city. on May 14, 1265, *Dante Alighieri first saw the light. The facts concerning his life are very meagre. Regarding this paucity of biographical data Carl Witte, an eminent Dante scholar, says, "We have had detailed accounts of Dante's life in considerable numbers for the last five hundred years. Yet the data on which we can rely are incredibly few. In order to fill up the large gaps, biographers have been accustomed to allow a free rein to their fancy or that of their predecessor." The greater part of Dante's life, like the life of Shakespeare, still remains concealed from the prying eyes of countless scholars.*

Little is definitely known of Dante's parents. His father was a notary and an inconspicuous member of the burgher class. He

was married twice. Dante's mother, his father's first wife, died in his childhood. All that is extant concerning her is an obvious allusion in the "Divine Comedy". Virgil says to Dante, (Inferno VIII, 45), *"Blessed be she who bore thee." There are faint traces of her and his step-mother, according to the conjectures of commentators, in the numerous tender and pathetic pictures of child life, in which the* "Divine Comedy" *abounds.*

The one source of information concerning Dante's youth is his own work, the "Vita Nuova." *There is only one event of his youth which he thought worthy of record. It was his meeting with Beatrice Portinari, when he was nine and she eight. "The history of his soul begins," says Scartazzini, "with his first meeting with Beatrice, through which a new life arose in him." He did not see her again for nine years.*

Meanwhile Dante evidently followed a rigorous course of study. "From his earliest boyhood," writes Boccaccio, "...he gave himself and all his time to continued study." He did not evince any precocity during this period of youth, but gave evidences of great natural capacity. It is thought that about 1274 *he came under the influence of Brunetto Latini, "a great philosopher and a perfect master in rhetoric, understanding both how to write and how to speak well." Under Latini's intellectual tutelage Dante probably became familiar with the Trivium, which consisted of Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric; and Quadrivium, which consisted of Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. He also studied poetry and art during this time. Doubtlessly he visited, in further pursuance of his studies, Paris, Bologna and Padua. It was a common practice for youths of the time to visit, in their quest of knowledge, the various seats of learning.*

On returning to Florence from one of the foreign universities, Dante, according to the "Vita Nuova," saw Beatrice after an interval of nine years. "When so many years were exactly complete since ..... on the last of these days it happened that this wonderful

lady appeared to me, clothed in purest white, between two gentle ladies... and passing along a street, turned her eyes toward that place where I stood very timidly; and by her ineffable courtesy, which is today rewarded in the eternal world, saluted me with such virtue that it semed to me then that I saw all the bounds of bliss,... and betaking myself to the solitude of my own chamber I sat down to think of this most courteous lady." This meeting was the germ of the "Divine Comedy." Dante became enamoured of Beatrice—he formed a great spiritual love for her. And after the manner of the literati of his time, he wrote love sonnets, canzoni, in her honor. His love soon ripened into an intense spiritual passion and culminated ultimately in his "divine passion." This love was noble and sublime, lofty and heavenly. It was a pure spiritual attraction. Beatrice's marriage to Simone di Bardi did not affect it. Even death itself did not abate its intensity.

Beatrice died at the age of twenty-four. Her death greatly distressed Dante. He sought solitude and gave himself up to intense study. To Boethius he turned for consolation and read his "De Consolatione Philosophiae." Philosophy became his guiding light. Later he transcended philosophy and came back to Beatrice, whom he had, for a time, forgotten. He symbolized her as Divine Theology. Subsequently he resolved "to write for her what for no other woman man has written." In order to fit himself for his task he ceased writing and made a comprehensive study of the Italian dialect. His work, "De Vulgari Eloquentia," written in 1308, *is the result of that study. He succeeded in forming a language, capable of the finest expression, out of a heterogeneous collection of dialects.*

Dante also pursued his nature studies with characteristic intensity. These studies embraced both ancient and modern writers and philosophers. His learning became vast and profound. His masters were Horace, Ovid, Lucan, Cicero, Livy, Virgil, Boethius, Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, Orosius, Duns Scotus, Albertus Magnus

and many others of less note. He became, also, most familiar with Ptolemy a the "Paradiso" and "Purgatorio" clearly show.

That these studies were fruitful is evident in the "Divine Comedy." A reader of Dante's minor works the "Vita Nuova" 1092, the "Convivio" 1308, the "De Monarchia" 1309, can distinguish the vast difference between the writers of these works and the writer of the "Divine Comedy." There is a great chasm separating them from the masterpiece. In the minor works Dante is just a great writer of his time; in the "Divine Comedy" he mounts even unto the very Empyrean of letters, and there ranks as one of the three greatest poets in all literature; he becomes one of those sublime geniuses whose thought and expression and feeling will never die. The date when Dante set to work on his immortal poem is not positively known. Scartazzini affirms "that the 'Commedia' came into existence between 1314 and 1321." "The actual working out of the poem," he also avers, "was preceded by a long period of preparation."

In 1292 Dante married Gemma di Donati, a relative of the Black leader, Corso Donati. He had four children, Pietro, Jacapo, Beatrice and Antonio. There are various suppositions concerning the reason for and the happiness of his married life which are without foundation; they are merely the musings of imaginative biographers. Nothing is definitely known of this side of his life. Not even from his intensely personal works can any reasonable relevant matter be gleaned.

It was Dante's public life, however, which was the turning point in his career. In 1295 his political life commenced when he joined the Guild of Apothecaries and Physicians. Subsequently he served in minor capacities and still later occupied important state positions. He was ambassador for Florence to San Gemignano, to Venice, to Rome and to other Italian cities. In June 1300 Dante was elected one of the six Priors of Florence—the highest office within the gift of the citizens. Regarding his priorate Dante says, in a

letter of doubtful authenticity, "All my troubles and hardships had their cause and rise in the disastrous meetings held during my priorate."

And Dante's priorate was fraught with stirring events. He refused to recognize the legality of the Pope's interference in Florentine affairs and the city was placed under interdict. The Blacks, and the Whites were harassing Florence by their turbulent strife; so Dante banished their leaders. Later the exiled Blacks succeeded in enlisting, in their behalf, the aid of Pope Boniface VIII. Dante, to offset their intrigues, went to Rome. While he was in Rome the Blacks secured control of Florence. Dante was accused of extortion, embezzlement and corruption. He was banished from Florence, June 27, 1302, *under the penalty of being burnt alive if found within the city.*

Banished from his beloved Florence, estranged from his family, and his property confiscated, Dante became a wanderer. For a time, however, he was with the exiled Whites endeavoring to devise means to rout the Blacks from Florence. In their three assaults on Florence the Whites were repulsed. Dante became disgusted with their coarseness, ingratitude and garrulous natures. He left them and went from city to city, from court to court. Poor and broken, in health, but not in spirit, he often "received the crumbs from the rich man's table" and "learned to taste the salt bread of exile." There are no positive data as to what places he visited during the bitter years of exile. It is thought that he went to Verona, to Can Grande della Scala, to Lunigiana, where he acted as a mediator for Marquis Marcello Malaspina; to Mantua, to Padua, to Lucca, and possibly to Paris. Villani, a contemporary Florentine historian, states that Dante went to Bologna to continue his studies and supervise those of his son Pietro. Finally Dante came to Ravenna, where he found a real haven. This city was his last refuge. He evidently came here in 1317 *and here he remained, except for several short intervals, until his death, which occurred on the night of September* 14, 1321.

During his nineteen years of heart-rending exile Dante met and overcame the greatest hardships. His pride—and he was the proudest of men—was humbled; he was out of his dearly beloved city; thrice he saw the Whites defeated at the gates of Florence; he saw his high hopes in Henry VII crushed. Everything that he was connected with seemed to go awry. They were misfortunes which would have made any ordinary mortal a misanthrope. But these hardships did not conquer Dante; he conquered them. He transcended his terrestrial woes and went even unto the heavens to find true solace. It was his firm belief in God which sustained him. He felt he had a mission to perform, to show man the evil of sin, the way to virtue and its ultimate realization. His misfortunes only disciplined him for his great work.

Despite the misery of his exile Dante ever kept in mind his ideal, his resolve, "to write for her what for no other woman man has written." That he could have achieved his ideal in such surroundings and under such circumstances is astounding. It is merely an evidence of his great genius. He is "the idealist poet", say Dean Plumptre, "who ha dno resting place amid the troubles of his time, but who was the representative at once of the traditions of a noble past and of the aspirations of a nobler future."

Dante did "write for her what for no other woman man has written." The "Divine Comedy" is one of the supreme poems of the world," says Charles A. Dinsmore, "because Dante was one of the world's greatest men. Such a harvest of thought could not grow on common soil. He ranks with the few central men of history as much by the preeminence of his soul as by the loftiness of his genius." "For Dante," says Carducci, "was above all things a very great poet—a great poet because he was a great man and a great man because he had a great and heroic conscience."

NOTES

At the end of each Canto will be found Notes sufficient for the verbal understanding of the text.

CANTO I

ARGUMENT

The Poet finds himself in a dark forest and emerging from it after a night of terror he is about to climb a sunny hill but is repulsed by three threatening beasts. From his danger Virgil rescues him and offers to lead him to happiness through another pathway.

Upon the middle of our mortal way
I found myself within a forest black
As from the rightful path I went astray.
Ah! how 'tis hard to tell my toilsome track
Amidst that forest weird and wild, that stirs
New dread in me whene'er its thought comes back.
So bitter is that death is little worse.
But of the boon I found ere I can tell,
Of other things I saw must sing my verse.
How did I enter there I know scarce well,
Such was the heavy sleep that on me weighed
When from the truthful path adrift I fell.
But as to the foothills my way I made,
There, where that dreadful vale arrived to its end,
Which had the clutch of fear on my heart laid,

Upwards I looked, and saw a glow ascend
On the hill's shoulders, from that planet's light
On which for guide all travelers depend.
Then in some measure was dispelled the fright
By which had been my heart's lake overrun
While in that place I passed such piteous night.
And as breathless and exhausted man
Who toiled ashore out of the foaming blue
Turns to the bitter waters and looks on—
Thus, while my frightened soul still forward flew,
Lingering eyes I turned upon that strait
That living man never permitted through.
Hardly was my weary body with rest satiate
When that deserted slope to climb I sought,
The foot stopt lower pivoting my gait.
Scarcely the ascent begun, before me shot
A leopardess, of agile body and spare,
Whose skin was bright with many a colored spot.
Into my face undaunted she would glare,
And hindered so my progress up the incline
That oft I turned me backwards in despair.
It was the hour when morn begins to shine
And with those other stars the Sun up came
Which were with him when first the Love Divine
Set those fair creatures moving in their frame:
So that all things conspired to give me cheer,
That beast's fair skin with brilliant spots aflame.
The day's bright hour, the sweet time of the year.
And yet I could not help a novel dread,
Sighting a lion who did then appear.

Straight a path against me he seemed to tread,
His head thrown high and with such hungry mien
That through the very air alarm was spread.
And a she-wolf came after, wondrous lean,
Full of all cravings in her body slight—
And many lands through her distressed have been—
'Twas she who filléd me with such deep fright.
Her very semblance holding me aghast,
That I lost hope of conquering the height.
As man who has his winnings gaily amassed,
If comes the time he must disgorge his gold
In all his thoughts is worried and downcast—
Like such made me that restless beast and bold
Who, pressing always closer, pace by pace,
Pushed me again down to the sunless wold.
While I thus ruined toward a lower place,
Suddenly appeared within my vision One
Who through disuse seemed to have lost the grace
Of speech. Soon as my eyes upon him ran
In the great waste—"Have pity!"—I cried, forlorn,
"Whate'er thou art, a shade, or living man."
"Not man, but human body I too have worn"—
Said he—"My parents came from Lombardy,
And Mantua their city. I was born
Sub Julio, in his late time, and lived to be
Under Augustus, citizen of Rome,
When men knew only a lying Deity.
I was a Poet, and sang in my tome
Anchises' noble son who came from Troy
After the burning of proud Ilium.

But why shouldst thou come back to gloom and noy?
Why not pursue the happy mount's ascent
Which is the cause and reason of all joy?"—
"Art thou that Virgil then, that opulent
Spring in whose flow such wealth of words is stored?"—
I answered him, and my forehead was bent.
"Of all the other poets honored lord,
Reck me the tireless study and loving heart
With which upon thy volume I have pored.
My only author thou, my teacher art:
The new sweet style from thee only I could take
Which to my name some honor did impart.
Behold the beast for fear of whom I spake.
Help me from her, O famous sage, I pray,
Because she makes my veins and pulses quake."—
"Thou must direct thy steps another way"—
Moved by my tearful aspect he then saith—
"Lest of these dangers thou become the prey.
The beast that made thee cry in fear of death
No living man can suffer to cross o'er,
But vexes him till he gives up his breath.
And is her nature so malign and sore,
Her ravenous desire is never sated,
And when well fed, she hungers even more.
Many an animal foul with her has mated,
And many will mate, until arrives the Hound
The one through whom her direful death is fated.
Hunger for land or pelf him shall not bound,
But Wisdom, Love and Virtue will be at his side.
'Twixt Feltro and Feltro he shall his kingdom found

And humble Italy to strength and pride
Restore, for whom Camilla virgin fair,
Eurialus, Nisus, Turnus, warring died.
For this beast he shall hunt everywhere
Till she will be chased into that cave infernal
Whence the first sinner's envy loosened her.
Therefore I judge, for thine own good supernal,
Thou must under my guidance now remain,
From here to go through that abode eternal
Where thou shalt hear the shriekings loud and vain,
And see the ancient spirits deep in woe,
A second death all calling in their pain;
Then also those who are contented, though
Compassed by fire, for they live hoping, once
Their sins atoned, among the blest to go.
To enable thee unto these last to advance
A worthier soul than I shall then appear
To lead thy steps after our severance.
For He who rules as Emperor that sphere
Permits me not to enter his domain
As to his law my mind did not adhere.
In ev'ry part He rules, there doth He reign:
There is his own great city, there his throne—
Happy are indeed those who that port attain."
—"For that true God who was to thee unknown"—
I begged him—"Poet, help me thou to flee
This ill and worse by which my path is strewn.
Where'er thou leadst I gladly will follow thee,
That I may see Saint Peter's gate, and those
Who pine, as thou hast said, so grievously."
He then moved on, and him I followed close.

Line 1—The action of the "Comedy"—which lasts ten days—starts on Good Friday of the year 1300—Reckoning the years from the Incarnation, a system followed by Dante, it would be the first day of the new century (1301). Dante had then reached halfway of the Biblical three-scores- and-ten.

2—The black forest in which the Poet finds himself is the state of individual sinfulness and also of social confusion. It must be born in mind that a moral and a political allegory blend together in the Divine Comedy because for Dante, the moral question of the individual man is correlated to society's political question: hence his hoped for establishment of One Just Empire as a counterpart to One True Church embracing all Christendom.

13—Out of the dark forest, the Poet sights the Hill of Righteousness. Cfr. Bunyan's *Delectable Mountain.*

32—The Leopardess is, morally, the symbol of Envy; politically, of the city of Florence.

38—The constellation of Aries, or Ram. The journey of the Poet takes place at the beginning of Spring, time in which the world was thought to have been created.

44—The Lion is the symbol of Pride—also the symbol of the French Court.

49—The she-wolf represents Greed, and the political activities of the Court of Rome.

67, etc.—Virgil, the Imperial Poet, born "sub Julio"—under Julius Caesar—typifies the natural wisdom of man and also the Imperial Idea.

73—Anchises' son: Aenas, the hero of Virgil's *Aeneid.*

91—Dante lacks now Knowledge and Grace to overcome the obstacles to the ascent of the Hill of Righteousness.

101, etc.—The identity of the allegorical Hound, expected destroyer of the she-wolf, is a controversial subject. Common opinion accepts Can Grande della Scala, a powerful Seigneur, very friendly with Dante, whose domain fell, more or less, between the mountain of Feltro and the city of the same name. He was a great supporter of the Imperial Idea and was expected to bring about its realization in Italy, thus ending the political ambition of the Court of Rome and restoring the fundamental condition for human morality and happiness.

107—Camilla, Eurialus, Nisus are mentioned in the *Aeneid* as defenders of Italy against the invaders from Troy.

CANTO II

ARGUMENT

Dante hesitates to follow Virgil and is encouraged by him, being told that Beatrice has sent him to be his Guide.

The day was drawing to a close, the browning air
All animals on earth from laboring
Released, and I girt me for the warfare—

Waiting me alone—against the harrowing
Road and the pity of what I was to see
Which my unerring memory shall sing.

O Muses, O high genius, succor me!
O Mind, in which all that I saw is writ,
Give here the proof of thy nobility.

—"Poet to whom myself I fain commit—"
I then began—" ere on this arduous trail
Thou trustest me, see if my virtue is fit.

Of Silvius' father has declared thy tale,
That to the immortal regions sensibly
He went, while clothed yet in mortal veil.

But if so favored him the enemy
Of ev'ry evil, for the high effect,
The who and what that was from him to be,
A thinking man will fain such truth accept
Because to father noble Rome and her
Empire, he was the Empyrean's elect.
Which both, if the full truth we must declare,
Established were to be the holy ground
Where of the greatest Peter sits the heir.
While on this journey, through thy verse renowned,
He heard of things which were the argument
That he should rule and there the Popes be crowned.
The chosen vessel thither also went
To carry comfort to that faith divine
Through which is man unto salvation bent.
But I, why should I go? By whose design?
I'm not Aeneas nor Paul. To all is plain
That my deserts of this are not condign.
Thus if from coming I do not refrain
I fear myself a fool; thou, who art wise,
Know'st even more than what I can explain.''
And as a man who wills and then decries
What he has will'd, and new thoughts change his scope
So that he never starts on his emprise,
As such I found myself on that dark slope
And in my thoughts the task already was ended
With which so promptly I had resolved to cope.
"—If I have now thy words well apprehended—"
Replied of the Magnanimous the shade—
"Thy spirit is by cowardice offended

Which oft the soul of men so doth pervade
That from praiseworthy purposes they turn
As shying beast that backs when vainly afraid.
To loose the bonds of fear, listen and learn
Why here I came and at whose words I felt
For thy distressful plight the first concern.
While I with the suspended spirits dwelt
Called me a Lady in whom such beauty shone
And blessedness that I was fain impelled
To do her will; her eyes more than the sun
Were bright, and she began in language sweet,
In her own tongue and in angelic tone:
"—O noble Mantuan soul whose fame the fleet
Passing of time could not on earth displace
And never will till time be itself complete,
A friend of mine, but not in fortune's grace,
On the deserted slope is so belayed
That from his journey he may his steps retrace.
Perhaps he stands already so dismayed—
As I have heard in Heaven—that I fear
Lest I have risen late to bring him aid.
Now go, and with thy words ornate and clear,
And all that may help him against the foe,
Thy succor lend to him and give him cheer.
I, Beatrice, bid thee now to go:
I come from place where to revert I yearn,
Love made me come and Love made me speak so.
When with my Lord again I shall sojourn,
Before Him often I shall sing thy praise."
She was then silent and I thus spoke in turn:

"O virtuous Dame, through whom alone the race
Of men exceeds all else that is contained
Within the heaven circling the least space,
So pleased am I by what thou hast ordained,
Had I already obeyed, I would feel remiss;
Thy wish no further needs to be explained.
But tell the reason why to this abyss
Thou art not loath to come from that most high
Abode for which thou cravest and where is bliss."
"—Since thou desir'st to delve so inwardly
To know the reason why to this low ground
Fearlessly I come, I shall briefly reply.
To dread only those objects are we bound
Which with the power of doing harm are fraught;
But nothing else, as there no fear is found.
But, through the mercy of God, I am so wrought,
Your misery can never reach my sense,
And of this fire the flames assail me not.
A gentle Lady in Heaven so laments
This hindrance which prompts me to send thee there
That Heaven's stern decree her pity bends.
'Twas she who made Lucia of this aware
And said to her." Thy friend has need of thee
And I commend him now to thy good care."
Lucia, foe to ev'ry cruelty,
Then hastened to the place where I adored
With ancient Rachel, to present her plea.
She said: "Beatrice, true praise of the Lord,
Canst thou help him who has lov'd thee so well,
Who rose for thee above the vulgar horde?

Dost thou not hear his plaint, nor see the fell
Dangers of death by which he now is faced
Upon that stream that mocks the ocean's swell?"
On earth were never persons in such haste
To court their gain or evil chance to quit
As, after hearing this, I quickly raced
Down from the blessed mansion where I sit,
And in thy noble speech my trust is laid
That honors thee and all who hark'd to it."
After she had her message thus conveyed
She turned aside, in tears, her gleaming eyes
Making me yet more prompt to bring thee aid.
And thus I came to thee, at her advice,
To rescue thee when by that beast oppressed
Which the short climb of the fair hill denies.
What then there is? Why, why shouldst thou here rest?
Why with such coward thoughts shouldst thou consort?
Frankness and daring why not in thy breast?
Since three high ladies up in heaven's court
For thine well-being never cease to sue
And mine own words such happiness purport?—"
As flowerets that beneath the hoar night dew
Droop down and fold; when bright then shines the sun
Straighten their stem and show their brilliant hue,
Such I became, my strength no longer wan,
And with such courage soon my heart was filled
That as a person bold I thus began:
"Truly generous she who succor willed,
And kind art thou who dost so promptly obey
The words she spoke that are with truth instilled.

Thou hast disposed my heart in such a way
With eagerness to come, by thine good word,
That back to my first purpose now I sway.
Lead on, for we are both of one accord:
Thou art my Teacher, thou my Lord and Guide."—
Then he moved on, and I, with hope restored
Through a rough and woody trail with him kept stride.

Line 13—Aeneas was the father of Silvius: part of Virgil's poem, the *Aeneid*, is devoted to the visit of the hero to the infernal regions.

16—Such privilege had been granted to Aeneas, in view of the fact that he had been chosen by Heaven to be the founder of Rome and of her Empire.

22—Imperial Rome was foreordained as the seat of the Papacy.

28—The "vessel of election" is Saint Paul. There was some medieval legend about a visit of Saint Paul to Hell, but when Dante speaks of the "immortal regions" (L. 14) he probably refers to Saint Paul's rapture to the Heavens.

52—In the "Limbo"—See *Inf.* IV.

53—Beatrice, the daughter of Folco Portinary, youthful ideal of love for the Poet: in a sublimated sense she represents Divine Knowledge, or Theology.

76—Men alone, of all earth creatures, have knowledge of God.

78—That is, on the Earth, which revolves under the heaven of the Moon—first and smallest of the seven Ptolemaic heavens.

94—The Blessed Virgin Mary.

97—Saint Lucia, the blinded virgin, is the symbol of enlightening Grace.

102—Rachel is the symbol of Divine Contemplation.

108—Perhaps Acheron, which Dante was about to cross.

CANTO III

ARGUMENT

The Poet, led by Virgil, goes through the portals of Hell and, inside them, but still outside of the real Hell, he meets the souls of those who have lived "without honor and without disgrace". He comes then to the river Acheron over which the souls are ferried into Hell proper.

Through me ye go into the City of woe,
Through me ye go into distress diuturnal,
Through me among the people lost ye go.
Righteousness moved my Architect Supernal:
The Power Almighty did my ramparts rear,
The Highest Wisdom and the Love Eternal.
No things but timeless were created ere
My walls were built and timeless I endure:
All hope abandon ye who enter here.
These warning words, of color quite obscure,
On a high portal's lintel I descried,
And: "Master, of their sense I am not sure."
And he to me, as person wise, replied:
"Here must be left every doubtful mood,
All cowardice must here be cast aside.

We have now reached the place where must be view'd,
As I told thee, those people's misery
Whose mind is reft of its trascendent good."
And with his hand in mine to comfort me,
With smiling look that gave me confidence,
He led me into that fearsome secrecy.
Here sighs and plaints and harrowing laments
Sounded beneath a dark and starless pall
So that I felt at first a sorrow intense.
Most divers tongues and gibberish from all
Foul jargons, shrieks of woe and angry roars,
Groans loud and hoarse and smiting hands withal,
Came from a crowd that flies a rounded course,
Ne'er resting, through that air timelessly blacked,
As sand that on the wind in circles soars.
And I, who felt by many doubts attacked,
Said: "Master, what is this I hear? What race
Are those that here are by such torments racked?"
He answered me: "Torn in this ceaseless pace
Thou see'st the sorry souls of those who passed
Their life untouched by honor or disgrace.
Mingled with them is that unworthy caste
Of Angels who not daring to rebel,
Fought not for God, but for themselves held fast.
To keep unsullied Heaven must repel
Their kind, and lest the damnèd should conceive
Some pride o'er them, they are barred from the deep Hell."
And I again: "Why, Master, do they grieve,
And shout their woe with cries so desperate?"
And he: "Brief words my answer shall achieve.

No hope of death may their distress palliate
And their black days are in such meanness spun
That they would welcome any other fate.
For them the world has only oblivion;
Justice and mercy both ignore their breed:
Wasted are words of them: look and pass on."
I looked and saw a streaming flag proceed
Around the circle in such rapid strain
It seemed to me nothing could check its speed.
After the flag, rushed on such endless train
Of people that my mind was in a maze
Wondering that so many death hath slain.
I recognized a few of that low race,
And among them I saw, while looking close,
Him who faint-hearted, left the mighty place.
Then quickly in me the certitude arose
That those must be the caitiffs who contrive
To give offense to God and to his foes.
Those wretches, none of whom was e'er alive,
Nakéd go 'round and painfully are stung
By wasps and fleas that on their body thrive.
They line their cheeks with blood which flows along
With burning tears and then is avidly
Sucked at their feet by worms there thickly strung.
And then, as further on I strove to see
I spied some people by a turgid stream,
Wherefore I said: "Now, Master, do grant me
To know what kind are those and why they seem
So eager and impatient to cross o'er
As I discern through the dusk-swathed gleam."

to p. 27

And he to me: "Of this shalt thou know more
When we shall come to a halt in our advance
On the distressing Acherontian shore."

I walked then on with humble countenance
Afraid lest through my speech I grieve my Guide,
Until we stood upon the river sands.

And lo! then came by vessel toward our side
A man of ancient age and snowy hair,
And: "Woe to you, O wretchéd souls!—" he cried.

"To you the sight of Heav'n is lost for e'er;
You to that yonder bank I shall convey,
Darkness and fire and frost await you there.

And thou, O living soul, get thee away
From there: thy place is not among the dead."
Then, when he saw that I did not obey:

"By other path, through other ports"—he said—
"Not from this shore, shalt thou thy passage gain,
And on a lighter boat shalt thou be sped."

"Charon"—then spoke my Guide—" thy wrath restrain;
It is thus willed up there where but to will
Is power to do: other demands are vain".

Then straightaway the woolly cheeks grew still
On that old boatman of the livid slough
Whose piercing eyes a flaming circle fill.

But at those cruel words that weary crew
Of nakéd spirits loudly gnashed their teeth
While o'er their faces spread a pallid hue.

God they blasphemed, their parents, all that breathe
The worldly air, their own birth's place and hour,
And the seed that to them did life bequeath.

Huddling together close I saw them cower
Sobbing and wailing, on the accurséd shore
That all awaits those who defy God's power.
Then Charon beckons them aboard, the hoar
Demon whose eye is like a fiery ball:
Any that lingers he beats with his oar.
As leaves that in the autumnal season fall
One following the other, till the tree
Has rendered to the soil his garment all,
Likewise, that Adam's evil progeny
Fling them, each at his call, down from the strand,
As birds that to their lure drop eagerly.
Thus by this crowd the darkened waves are spanned
And ere they step upon the other side
Gathers already on this another band.
—"My son—" spoke then to me my kindly Guide—
"All those that die under the wrath of God
From ev'ry clime assemble on this tide.
Justice Divine is their unceasing prod
Changing into desire their abject fear
So that they are prompt to cross beyond the flood.
Never good soul is given passage here,
Therefore if Charon did of thee complain
What meant his words must now to thee be clear."
This he had finished, when the dark champaign
So fiercely quaked and gave me fright so intense
That mem'ry of it bathes me with sweat again.
The tearful earth gave forth a windstorm, whence
Flashed through the heavens a vermillion glare
That conquered in my body ev'ry sense;
And as if seized by sleep I droppéd there.

Lines 5-6—The three Persons of the Trinity.

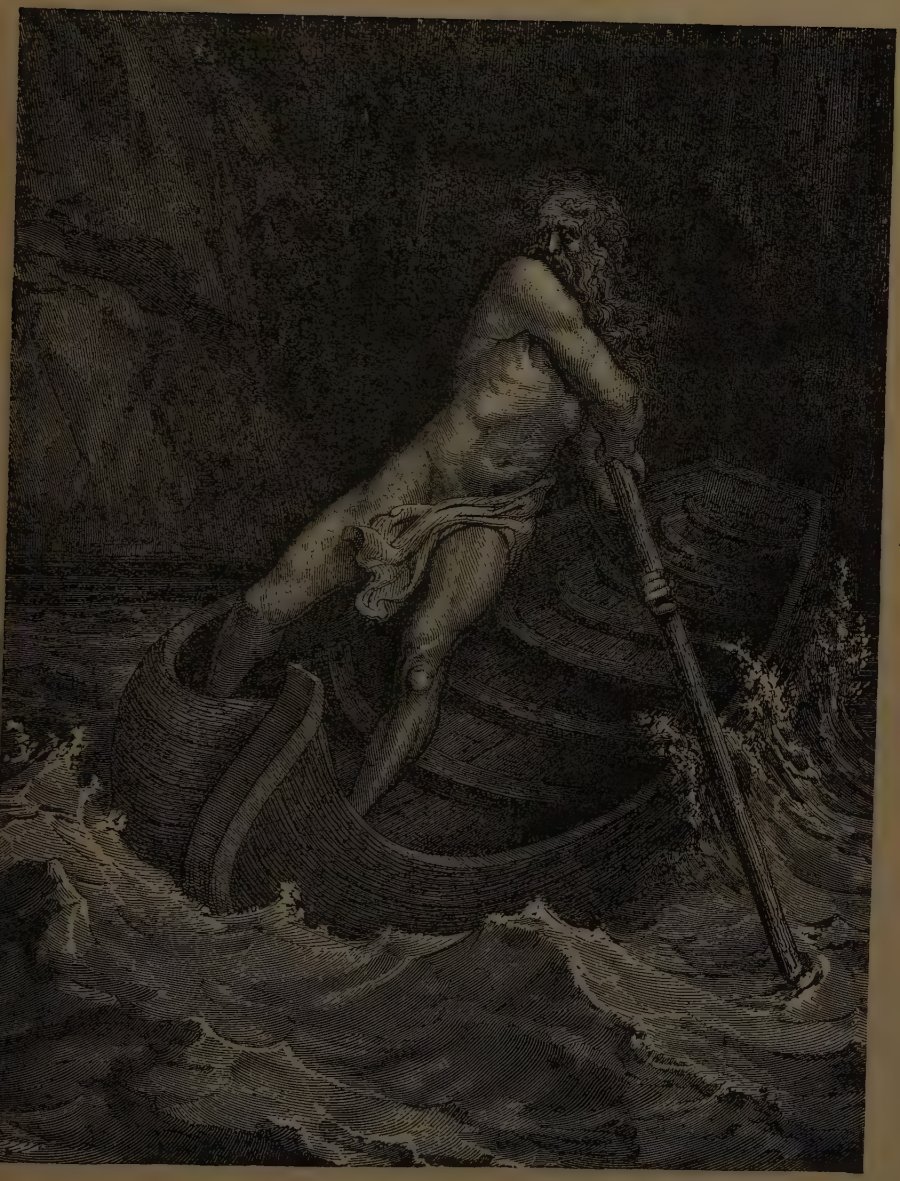
17—Bereft of Truth.

54—Possibly Celestine, elected Pope in 1294. He resigned the office a few months afterwards. He was a man of acknowledged holiness of life but Dante perhaps was angered at him because his resignation opened the way to his successor who became Boniface VIII. Dante was bitterly opposed to Boniface on political grounds.

77—Charon, the ferryman of Hell according to mythological tradition.

85—Dante is destined to the glory of Heaven and his passage to the world beyond shall be on the boat which an Angel guides (Purgatory II) from the mouth of the Tiber to the shores of the mountain of purification.

136—Dante leaves to the reader's imagination how he crossed Acheron. It is easy to suppose that he was carried by Virgil as in other circumstances later on.



CANTO III-82

CANTO IV

ARGUMENT

The Poet, on the farther side of Acheron, enters the first Circle of Hell, the "Limbo" of the unbaptized where he meets many famous personages.

The heavy slumber in my head was shaken
By roaring thunder that roused me at once
As when a man is made by force to awaken.
My eyes were rested and with keener glance,
Standing upright, I looked intently around
To see what place I was in those strange lands.
Truth is that on the brink myself I found
Of the grief-laden valley of that foul pit
Wherein of endless plaints the thunders sound.
'Twas dark and deep with clouds o'erhanging it,
And though I scanned its bottom fixedly
No certain view the darkness would permit.
Then said the Poet, pale as death, to me:
"Down to the blinded world we shall proceed:
I shall be first and second thou shalt be."
And I who to his color had giv'n heed:
"How can I come if thou art torn by fears
By whom alone I am from doubting freed?"
And he to me: "The suffering that sears
The souls below has painted on my face
That pity which to thee as fright appears.

"Avaunt! The lengthy road spurs on our pace."
Thus entered he and bade me follow where
The first of circles rounds the abysmal place.
Here as by listening I grew aware,
No plaints arose but sighings loud and long
Which kept a-trembling that eternal air.
These were by grief and not by torments wrung
From infants, men and women there confined
And grouped in many a vast and varied throng.
Then the good Master: "Askst thou not what kind
Those spirits are whom thou art meeting here?
Ere thou goest further, keep this firm in mind:
They did not sin, but baptism did not clear
Their souls, hence in their works no merits lie,
According to the faith thou hold'st so dear.
And if they lived before Christianity
They did not worship God in manner true:
And with this kind my place have even I.
No other crime, only this fault we rue;
And while we are lost, but this our life offends
That vainly we hope, with yearning ever new."
When this I heard, was my heart's grief intense
For I perceived that many worthies were
Within that Limbo living in suspense.
"Tell me, Master of mine, tell me, Seigneur,"
Said I, desirous of that certitude
That makes one's faith against all errors square—
"Has hence a spirit to supreme blisshood
Through his or others' merits ever gone?"
As he my covert speech well understood,

Thus answered me: "I saw a Mighty One
Appear, when to this state I had but come,
Upon whose head the sign of vict'ry shone.
And our first parent's shade He drew herefrom,
Abel his son and him who built the Ark,
Moses the fount of laws, and Abraham
Most tried and most obedient patriarch;
King David, Israel with his sons and sire,
And Rachel whom he won by the long cark,
And many more who joined the heavenly choir.
And thou must know that till the time of these
No human spirits could to glory aspire."
While thus he spoke, our progress did not cease
But through the forest thick we went along,
The one, I mean, where spirits were the trees.
Down from the crest our way had not been long
As yet, when a great blaze my vision smote
That a dark hemisphere far outward flung.
It was from us still a good deal remote,
But I already could discern in part
That in that place were people worthy of note.
"O thou who gracest ev'ry science and art,
Who are those shades whose noble countenance
Their manner from the rest seems to dispart?"
And he: "The honor which their name commands
Up in the world where is thy living sphere
Gains them from heaven grace for this advance."
Meantime a voice resounded in my ear:
"All ye give honor to the bard most high:
His shade that had left us, again is here."

I saw, once spent the echo of that cry,
Four mighty spirits toward us hastening:
Joy was not in their traits, nor misery.

Then in my ears the Master's words did ring:
"Mark him whose hand a gleaming sword holds fast,
Who leads the other three as would a King.

Homer is he, the poet unsurpassed;
Horace the satirist next thou canst see,
Ovid is third and Lucan is the last.

The name that by one voice was called, with me
Joins in a bond the spirits of all four,
And so they honor me quite properly."

Thus was the noble school convened once more
Around the master of the noblest style
Whose eagle wings above all others soar.

Among themselves they held converse a while,
Then turned to me and a sweet welcome bade
And that from my good master drew a smile.

A greater honor still to me they paid
As they took me within their group as guest:
Thus I amidst such wisdom sixth was made.

Thus toward the light together we progressed
Reasoning things which were fair arguments
Then in that place, but now to ignore is best.

We came to a noble castle that extends
Its lofty walls for seven times around
While a clear running stream adds a defense.

O'er this we crossed as on a solid ground;
Then seven gates to us a passage gave
Till on a fresh green meadow ourselves we found.

There people dwelt whose gaze was slow and grave;
Authority in their traits showed plainly through,
They spoke with leisure and their voice was suave.
To a corner of the place we soon withdrew
Upon an open and ligh-bathéd height
Whence all the spirits clearly stood in view.
From there upon the green enamel bright
The mighty spirits to me pointed were
And still I exalt myself now for that sight.
Electra I saw, with many courting her
'Midst whom Aeneas and Hector I descried;
Then Caesar, armed, his falcon eyes a-glare.
Penthesilea with Camilla abide
I saw elsewhere, to King Latinus close
Who sat with fair Lavinia by his side.
I saw that Brutus who 'gainst Tarquin rose;
Lucretia, Julia, Marcia standing by
Cornelia, and by himself in lonely pose
Saladin; then I somewhat raised my eye
And saw the Master of all men who know
Sitting with philosophic family.
All him admire and praise on him bestow.
I could see Plato there, and Socrates
Closer to him than all the rest may go.
Dioscorides who knew the properties
Of things, Diogenes, Heraclitus,
And Anaxagoras: Empedocles
Thales, and Zeno, and Democritus
Who ascribes the world to chance—and Orpheus then,
Seneca stoic, Linus, Tullius,

Euclid and Ptolemy and Avicen,
Galen, Hippocrates; there I beheld
Averroes who did the Comment pen.
Many I must leave that in that meadow dwelled,
As oft the facts more of my words would take
But forth by the long theme I am impelled.
The sixfold company comes now to a break.
We are but two: another way I am led
From this quiet air to that which the winds shake,
And thus I came to where all light is dead.

Line 24—Dante's Hell is shaped like an immense funnel, with terraces or "circles" of narrowing periphery along its surface.
28—The unbaptized souls suffer only the deprivation of God's vision but no sensible punishment.
34—No merits for a supernatural life.
45—"Limbo" is a word of Teutonic origin and means "hem" or "border". It indicates a sort of borderland for the innocent but unbaptized souls. It will be enough to state here that Catholic Theologians, led by Saint Thomas, assert that unbaptized children will not actively suffer but enjoy a natural happiness. And so other souls who have in life followed natural justice.
52—Virgil was dead but a short time when Christ victorious over death drew from Limbo the souls of the Patriarchs and of other holy personages.
59—Israel, or Jacob.
68—The fire pushed back the darkness.
91—The name of poet. See L. 80.
96—Homer.
106—The castle of Human Wisdom approached through the gates of the Seven Liberal Arts.
121—Electra, mother of Dardanus, the founder of Troy. Penthesilea, heroine of the siege of Troy, Camilla: see *Inf. I.* Latinus, king of Latium, whose daughter, Lavinia, became wife of Aeneas. Lucretia, etc.: famous Roman Matrons.
130—The great Sultan of the XIII Century: considered even by the Christians a model of virtue.
131—Aristotle.
136, etc.—Philosophers and scientists of the Greek and Roman world, except Avicen and Averroes, Arab commentators of Aristotle.

CANTO V

ARGUMENT

The Poet is now in the second Circle of Hell where luxury is punished.

From the first circle thus took me my trail
Into the next, which narrower margin molds
But where more grief causes a louder wail.
There Minos' horrid shape the entrance holds
Who probes each sinner with a snarl and leer,
Judging and sending by his various folds.
I mean that when the ill-born souls appear
Before him, all their sins they are prompt to tell,
And he, to whom the depths of sin are clear,
Sees for each soul which is place in Hell:
As many times his tail 'round him is swung,
As many circles down the soul must dwell.
Before him always stands a changing throng:
Each soul in turn to its hard judgment goes;
They speak, they hear, and downward they are flung.

"O thou who comest into this house of woes"—
To me said Minos, heedless of his high
Office a while, as he saw me come close—
"Mind how thou movest and whom so daringly
Thou trust'st; beware of this too ample door."
And my Leader to him: "Why such outcry?
Bar not his way by Fate provided for.
It is thus willed up there where but to will
Is power to do, and thou must ask no more."
And now the doleful wails began to fill
My ears, and of that place I must recite
Where I was struck by rumbling plaints and shrill.
There, where I came, is mute every light:
There mounts a roar as from tempestuous main
When with its waves the winds discordant fight.
That never still infernal hurricane
Carries the spirits with its whirling urge
Turning and smiting them in endless pain.
And when before the chasm the souls emerge,
There loud the cry, the plaint and the lament,
There against God their blasphemies insurge.
I understood that such a punishment
Was to the sinners of the flesh assigned
In whom by passion had been reason bent.
As in the fall the starlings, all aligned
In a long stream and thick, are by their wings
Borne on, thus are the sinners by that wind.
Them here and here and up and down it flings,
And of a pause or pain of lesser form
There is no hope for them that comfort brings.

And as the cranes stretched out in lengthy swarm
Go through the air singing their doleful lay,
Thus there I saw upon that whirling storm
Come grieving spirits in a long array;
So that: "What shades are these, Master"—I said,
"Chastised by the dark air in such a way?"
He answered me: "She coming at the head
Of those thou seek'st to know, has famous name
As queen whose power o'er many tongues was spread.
So deeply lost was she in carnal shame
That lustful deeds as lawful she decreed
To take away from her own vice the blame.
Semiramis she is, whom—as we read—
What is now Sultan's land as ruler knew.
Ninus she espoused and him she did succeed.
She who comes next, herself, love-maddened, slew
And to Sichaeus' urn made vain her gage.
Lustful Cleopatra see beyond those two."
Helen I saw, who brought upon her age
Such deep distress—and great Achilles passed
Who did with Love his final battle wage.
Paris, Tristan I saw: a number vast
Of spirits, whom my Leader pointed all,
That suddenly, through love, from life were cast.
After thus hearing my good Doctor call
The names of many an ancient dame and knight
I felt like lost, as pity held me in thrall.
—"Poet"—then I began—"I wish I might
Speak to those two who embraced together fly
And seem upon the wind to be so light."

He answered me: "Wait thou till they come by,
Closer to us, then ask by that intense
Love that moves them and they shall fain comply."

Soon as the wind toward us that couple bends,
Lifting my voice: "O wearied souls"—I cried
—"Come, speak a while to us, if none contends."

As doves with moveless wings and opened wide
Called by their longing, fly to their sweet nest,
And by their will alone they seem to glide—

Thus, from the ranks of Dido, came abreast
Of us those two, upon the air malign;
So strong had been my passionate request.

"O thou most gracious creature and benign,
Who goest through this black welkin, visiting
Us who in the world have left a blood-red sign,

If friendly were the Universal King
We gladly would lift our prayer for thy peace,
Since on our plight thou look'st so pitying.

Whate'er to hear or speak to thee may please,
Willingly hear or speak we shall with ye,
While stays the wind, as thou canst see, at ease.

The city where I was born sits by the sea
Where Po's wide-shoréd stream at last descends
With all its followers, at peace to be.

Love that a gentle heart quickly apprehends
Seized this my fellow for the body fair
Taken from me—in way that still offends.

Love, that no one beloved will ever spare
From loving, with his charms my heart so caught,
That, as thou seest, e'en now his fate I share.

'Twas love that to one death both of us brought.
Our murderer... Caina waits for him."
Such were the words that came from them unsought.
As of these souls I heard the story grim
I bowed my head and long I held it thus
Till said my Guide: "What does thy thoughts bedim?"
When I could answer I began: "Alas!
What sweet imaginings, what passion burning,
Must have led them to that most woeful pass!"
Then I bestirred myself and to them turning,
I thus began: "Francesca, in presence of
Thy sorrow, I can but weep with pity and mourning.
But, at the time of the sweet sighs above,
Do tell me how and when to certainties
Your dubious yearnings were transformed by love."
And she to me: "No sorrow greater is
Than to recall the bliss of time ago
When misery stings: thy Guide well knows of this.
But since thou crav'st so eagerly to know
Our love's sad story and to its root most sheer,
I'll be like one who speaks while his tears flow.
We read one day, for pleasure, the career
Of Launcelot, when caught in love's sweet net:
Alone we were, of all suspicion clear.
During that reading oft our glances met
And pallor on our faces oft spread o'er;
But by one point alone our fate was set.
When reading that the smile long yearnéd for
Suddenly was kissed by him in love so blest,
This who shall be from me disjoined ne'ermore,

His lips upon my mouth all trembling pressed.
The writer and the book were Gallehaut
To us; that day we did not read the rest."
While spoke one spirit, wailed the other so,
That overwhelmed by pity's mounting swell
I fainted as a man in death's last throe—
And to the ground, like a dead body, I fell.

Line 4—Minos, fabled King of Crete, renowned for his stern justice is placed by the Poet as a Judge in Hell.

34—At the gap or chasm from the first to the second circle the souls make a louder outcry reminded perhaps of their entrance into Hell.

58—Semiramis, wife of Ninus, King of Babylon, reigned as Queen after his death.

61—This is Queen Dido who, abandoned by Aeneas, killed herself. She was to have married Sichaeus. See Virgil's *Aeneid.*

67—Paris, the lover of Helen of Troy. Sir Tristan, the lover of Yseult: both met violent deaths.

86—These two souls are Francesca, daughter of Guido da Polenta, and Paolo Malatesta of Rimini. Francesca was married against her will to Lanciotto, Paolo's elder brother. Legend makes Paolo gentle and handsome, Lanciotto, ugly and ferocious. Lanciotto, discovering the secret love of Paolo and Francesca slew both of them.

98—Francesca was born at Ravenna, a city at the mouth of the river Po.

108—The gulches of Hell are at times named after the most prominent figure there. The gulch of murderers and traitors is called "Caina" from Cain. Lanciotto Malatesta is expected there.

128—The book about Launcelot and Queen Guenever was very popular.

137—As Gallehaut (Sir Galahad) had brought together Launcelot and Guenever thus that book did for Paolo and Francesca.

CANTO VI

ARGUMENT

The Poet now finds himself in the third Circle; here the Gluttonous are punished by being immersed in a putrid swamp and beaten by rain, hail and snow.

Soon as my mind came back, which had been locked
Before the pity of the kindred pair
That with its grief had all my senses shocked,

New tortures and new tortured everywhere
I see 'round me, no matter how I strain
My sight, or move, or turn me here and there.

I am in the third circle of the rain
Accursed, eternal, wearisome and cold
Whose rule and nature e'er the same remain.

Snow, thick hail and dark water I behold
Pouring down through the air timelessly dimmed;
Stenches the earth that soaks this slimy mould.

Cerberus, cruel monster, strangely limbed
From his three throats emits a dog-like bark
Over the crowd with which that lake is brimmed.

He has red eyes and unctuous beard jet-dark:
His belly is huge, his hands are clawed to wound:
He tears and skins and hews the sinners stark.
Hit by the rain each howls as would a hound,
And tries to shield one flank with the other side:
Often the godless rabble turns around.
The great worm Cerberus, soon as he spied
Us two, displayed his fangéd triple jaw,
His members all a-quiver 'neath his hide.
And here my Guide with palms outspread I saw
Bend down and pick some earth which then he tossed
By handfuls, into each ravenous maw.
As dog who barks at all who him accost
But calms when on the sop his teeth he places
And in his rush to feed is wholly lost,
Thus suddenly fell down the filthy faces
Of Cerberus the fiend, whose barks so stun
The souls that they for deafness would give graces.
Over the rain-trod shades we then walk on
In our advance and stamp beneath our feet
Those phantoms vain that mock a living man.
Prostrate were all of them deep in that sleet
But after seeing us arose one shade
Quickly, and on its haunches made its seat.
"Thou who art led through this infernal grade"—
It said—"Hast thou of me some memory?
Thou hadst been made before I was unmade."
And I to it: "The anguish vexing thee
Perhaps has taken thee so from my mind,
Meseems I never did thy person see.

But tell me who thou art and why assigned
To such sad place and such a horrid fret
Than which no viler, if a harder kind."
And he to me: "Thy country so beset
With envy that the measure overruns
Kept me while life for me serene was yet.
My name was Ciacco to you citizens.
Gluttony's damning sin has, as thou seest,
Brought me to break beneath the rain that stuns.
Nor I, sad soul, do here alone exist.
Similar penalties on these requite
Similar faults." And here his sermon ceased.
I answered: "Ciacco, thy distressing plight
So weighs on me that e'en to tears I mourn;
But tell me, if of this thou hast foresight,
To what will come the people of the torn
City, and if any just is there alive
And what has upon it such discord borne."
And he: "Among themselves long will they strive,
Then come to blood, and with much injury
The forest party will forth the other drive.
But soon the former overturned shall be—
Within three suns—while shall the latter rise
By force of him who now steers by the lee.
This a long time the other will despise
Oppressing it beneath a heavy load
Although it resents its shame and vainly cries.
Just there are two, to whom no heed is showed.
Envy with pride and greed past any bound
Are the three flames that all their hearts corrode."

With this he brought to an end his tearful sound.
And I to him: "A gift of words again
I ask, that may another thing expound.
Farinata and Tegghiajo, such worthy men,
Jacopo, Arrigo, Mosca, and all the rest
Who strove for good according to their ken,
Tell where they are and so direct my quest,
As deeply I yearn to know whether they are
Sweetened by Heav'n or poisoned by Hell's pest."
He said: "Their souls are black with heavier tar.
Through various guilts lower in the pit they lie.
Thou shalt see them, shouldst thou descend that far.
But when thou art in the sweet world up high,
See that my mem'ry among men is stirred:
No further shall I speak, nor yet reply."
From straight, his eyes turned crookéd and hate-blurred;
A while he looked at me, then bowed his head:
Headlong he fell among the sightless herd.
My Leader then: "He shall not leave that bed
Until the Angel's trumpet blast shall boom
When will appear the Powerful whom all dread.
Then each shall find again his doleful tomb,
Shall take his flesh with ev'ry former trait
And hear his timelessly resounding doom."
Thus we proceeded on with slackened gait
Over the mixture foul of shades and rain
Touching a little on the future state.
Therefore I questioned: "Master, will this pain
Harder become, beyond the great decree,
Or less perchance, or shall the same remain?"

"Consult thy knowledge—" he replied to me—
"Which states that when more perfect is a thing
More feels the good and so the misery.
And though this curséd crowd shall never spring
To true perfection, yet that last event
To them a higher entity shall bring."
Over the road on a round course we went,
Speaking of much that here I do not set,
Till to the point we came of the descent.
And Plutus the great en'my here we met.

Line 13—Mythological three-headed monster.

26—A vile food to a vile beast.

52—"Ciacco" in the Florentine vernacular meant a hog; but there was also a Ciacchi family in Florence. The identity of this Ciacco is uncertain.

64, etc.—Though Florence was mostly Guelf—or of the Poet's party as against the Ghibellines, the Emperor's partisans—it became divided in Dante's time into the factions called the "Whites" and the "Blacks". The Whites are the "forest party" because their leader had recently come from the country: no offense is meant as Dante himself was a White. The Whites chased the Blacks from Florence in 1301; but in 1303 the former were overturned (L. 67) and the latter placed in power through the intervention of Charles of Anjou, brother of King Philip of France, sent to Florence as representative of Pope Boniface VIII. This was the occasion of Dante's exile and of his turning definitely to a Ghibelline program.

69—Boniface VIII, who at the time Ciacco is supposed to be speaking (1301) was still undecided between the two parties and took no definite course, steering, as it were, by the lee of the shore.

70—The triumphant ultra-Guelf Blacks remained in power notwithstanding all diplomatic and armed attempts of the exiled Whites.

73—Probably Dante means himself as one of the two just men.

95—At the Final Judgment.

107, etc.—The more perfect is a being, the more amenable to joy or suffering. The souls of the damned, recovering their body after the Final Judgment will not become more perfect, in the absolute sense, but having then a "higher entity" they will be passible of greater suffering.

CANTO VII

ARGUMENT

At the entrance of the fourth Circle (of the Avaricious and Prodigal) Dante is threatened by Plutus who is quickly subdued by Virgil. After viewing the torments in this circle Virgil explains the influence of Fortune on human affairs. Crossing the fourth Circle, they come upon the Fifth (of the Wrathful and Gloomy) where the sinners are plunged in a murky river, the Styx.

"Pape Satan, Pape Satan, aleppe"
Plutus began with his deep throated squawk;
And then to steady mine uncertain step,
Said the all-knowing Sage: "Thou must not balk
Through fear of him, as he cannot contest,
For all his power, thy coming down this rock".
And then those swollen cheeks he coldly addressed,
Saying: "Accurséd wolf, hold thou thy tongue;
And be consumed by rage within thy breast.
There is a cause this journey to prolong
To darkest hell: 'tis willed where Michael
Wrought heaven's vengeance on the prideful throng."
As sails that with the wind their bosom swell
And drop to a heap if haply cracks the mast,
Thus to the ground that cruel monster fell.

Down to the fourth of circles then we passed
Taking of those sad shores a larger span
Where all the evil of the world is cast.

Ah me! justice of God that so heaps on
Such new travails and pains as there struck me!
And why doth sin make such a wreck of man?

As by Charybdis does the broken sea
While the contrasting waves clash and rebound,
Thus must the people here dance wretchedly.

The crowds that here larger than e'er I found
With loud outcries moved on from left and right
By force of breast rolling great weights around.

Facing each other they would clash and smite
And turning then and there they would start back
Shouting: "Why letst though go, why holdst thou tight?"

They circled then again the doleful track
From either side to the point opposite
And cried their insult at the other pack.

And after a half circle was complete
To the new jousting, each again would turn.
My heart through grief almost had ceased to beat,

And—"Master—" I then said—"I fain would learn
What kind are these and whether clerics were
Those tonsured ones that on our left so churn."

And he to me: "They were all faulty in their
Mind's vision during their first life career,
And never used their wealth in measure fair.

This by their voice is shouted plain and clear
When they reach those two points midway the ring
Where of their sins adverse the cleft is sheer.

Clerics were those with no hair covering
Their heads, and Popes and Cardinals were some
In whom ruled avarice past reckoning."
And I said then: "Master, amid this scum
Should I not recognize at least a few
That were by these sad evils overcome?"
And he to me: "Vain thoughts dost thou pursue;
Their undiscerning life so them besoils
That human sight must find too dark their hue.
They shall forever come to the two broils;
Those with fists closed, and these with locks all shorn
Shall rise again from the sepulchral toils.
Ill giving and ill keeping makes them mourn
The beauteous world and sets them to this grief:
Whate'er it is, my words need not adorn.
Now canst, my son, see how the jest is brief
Played by those goods that trouble so mankind
And of which Fortune donor is or thief.
All gold that 'neath the moon a man could find
Or that these wearied souls had power to obtain
Could not for one of them assuage this grind."
—"Master—" said I to him—"this also explain:
What is this Fortune, as I hear thee tell,
That in its claws thus holds all the world's gain?"
And he to me: "Fool creatures, how the spell
Of ignorance your minds so deeply offends!
I want thee now to absorb my sentence well:
The One whose wisdom past all things trascends,
Making the heavens set on them a guide
So that each part unto the rest resplends,

As equal light is shed on ev'ry side.
Likewise he set a guide and minister
Over the splendors of your worldly pride.
Such vanities to change 'tis given her
From blood to blood and so from race to race
Beyond all shifts of human wit and care.
Thus languishes one race and its high place
To another by her judment she transfers,
Which is hid as in grass a serpent's trace.
Nor can your knowledge her decrees traverse:
With her foresight she judges and her reign
Disposes as the other gods do theirs.
Her permutations come in endless chain,
Neccssity makes her hasten her stride
So often comes who would his turn attain.
Such is the one by many crucified
With evil words and with reproach amiss
E'en when her praises should by them be cried.
But she is blesséd and hears naught of this:
Sharing the primal creatures' happiness
She turns her sphere and thus enjoys her bliss.
Let us go deeper now in this distress;
Already falls every star that rose
When I first moved, forbidding tardiness."
We crossed, and on the nether bank came close
Upon a fount that boiling over pours
Into a gullet wide that from it flows.
Rather than dull, the stream was dark and worse;
Along its murky waves we made our way
Downward proceeding in a devious course.

These dismal waters in the end allay
Forming the lake of Styx after descending
To the foot of the crags malign and grey.
And as my eyes to novel sights were bending
I could see people in that miry bed
Nakéd and muddy and a mad rage portending.
Not only with hands, but even with their head
And breast and feet they wildly each other smote
And bit and rent each other shred by shred.
My Master said: "The souls that here we note
Are those whom anger held in slavery:
Hold this also for sure that in that moat
Under the water people are who sigh
And make those bubbles at the top appear
As thou canst see, wherever turns thine eye.
Sunk in the slime they say: — We had no cheer
In the sweet air where the Sun's gladness shone,
Holding within a vapour bleak and drear.
Now fixed in this black mire we sadly groan—
Within their choking throat this hymn they cluck
As no word they can say with clearer tone."
We circled thus around that slough of muck
An arc far-reaching—between stream and bank
Keeping our eye on those who that mud suck.
Stopped us at last a tower's forbidding flank.

Line 1—Strange sounds like the gibberings of an enraged man. Probably with no meaning though some interpretation has been offered.

11—In Heaven.

17—Going further down the abyss.

22—Famed whirpool in the Sicilian Straits.

25, etc.—Coming from opposite directions the two crowds clash at the two halfway points of the circle.

30—The Prodigal and the Avaricious reproach each other.

35—The impact of the heavy stones rolled by the sinners.

39—Clergymen shaved the crown of their head.

56—A significant attitude of the Avaricious; the Prodigal are deprived of their last ornament, their hair.

74—Angelic Intelligences are directing each of the seven heavens so that their light and influence is harmonically proportioned and equally distributed.

77—As the Heavens are regulated in an equal and permanent manner, thus a Guide and Minister (the Intelligence called Fortune) has been placed over human vicissitudes which are unequal and impermanent as far as the individual is concerned.

87—As the Angelic Intelligences of the Heavens.

90—So rapidly do human generations succeed each other.

94—The Angels.

98—It is now past midnight. The Poet's journey began in the morning.

123—The fog of discontent in their heart.

CANTO VIII

ARGUMENT

The Poet reaches a watch tower on the outer bank of the river Styx and ferrying over the stream he meets other sinners (still in the Fifth Circle, of the Wrathful), then, disembarking on the inner bank of Styx he finds himself before the walls of the City of Dis.

I say, proceeding, that a while before
We had drawn close to that high tower's foot
Our eager eyes went up its top to explore
As from up there we saw two flamelets shoot
Answered by another from so far away
That to see that our eyes were scarce acute.
Turned to the sea of all sound wit, I say:
"Master, what does this mean? What th'other fire
Doth answer back? Who are that both display?"
And he to me: "Upon the filthy mire
Already thou canst see what is expected,
If the reek mounting foils not thy desire."
Never an arrow was from cord ejected
To speed so swiftly toward its distant goal
As I just then perceived—toward us directed—

A smallish boat that came upon the shoal,
Under the guidance of a lone coxswain
Who cried: "I have thee now, O evil soul!"

"Flegyas, Flegyas, thou criest in vain,
This time"—my Master said—"Only as we pass
Over the mud, we shall tread thy domain."

As one who hears of a great fraud that has
Been played on him, and feels of wrath the goad
Thus looked in baffled anger Flegyas.

Down in the vessel then my Leader strode.
Following him I entered, at his word,
And only then it seemed to carry a load.

As soon as I and Virgil were aboard,
The ancient prow went on—with this new crew
Deeper than is its wont it plowed the ford.

While we were running o'er the stagnant slough
One filled with mud stood up in front and cried:
"Who art who comest before thine hour is due?"

And I: "I come, but shall not here abide.
And who art thou by filth disfigured so?"
"Thou seest a man who weeps—" he then replied.

I answered him: "With all thy tears and woe,
Accurséd soul, remain thou here mud-bound,
For though thou art all filth, well thee I know".

Then toward our boat he stretched both hands, but found
My Guide alert to ward him off his quest,
Saying: "Away; down with the pack, thou hound."

And then, his arms around my neck, he pressed
His lips upon my cheeks: "Disdainful soul—"
He said: "She who bore thee be ever blessed.

That man in life played a most prideful role.
By no good deed is left his mem'ry impearled:
Thus here his soul is wrathful past control.
How many hold themselves kings of the world
Up there, who shall stay here like pigs in mire
And after them shall horrid scorn be hurled.''
Said I then: "Master, 'twere my fond desire
To see him choked beneath this dismal grume
Before we leave behind this lake entire."
And he to me: "Ere the far shore shall loom
Unto thy sight, thy yearning shall be met;
Justly its fulfillment on such wish shall bloom."
And soon I saw on him such fierce onset
Made by that crowd bedecked in murky pall
That God I praise for it and thank Him yet.
"Have at Filippo Argenti"—cried they all:
And with his teeth, that spirit malcontent
From Florence, vented on his flesh his gall.
We left him there, nor shall more words be spent
On him. Then by such woe my ears were jarred
That I oped wide my eyes and forward bent.
Said my good Master: "Soon we shall be hard
By the great city known as Dis—and there
On mighty crowds the citizens stand guard."
"Master, indeed its minarets a-glare—"
Said I—"already I see within the gorge;
So red they gleam as if from fire they were
Issued." Said he: "Heat from the eternal forge
Burns within them and makes them red outside:
In this low Hell now comes the fiery scourge."

Thereon we came to the deep moats and wide
Circling all 'round the city desolate
By iron-like high ramparts fortified.
We covered a wide circuit, till our mate
Having now reached the place he sought, aloud
Shouted: "Go ye now forth, here is the gate."
Above I saw the heaven-fallen crowd
More than a thousand strong, whose cry arose
Raging: "Who's this who still by death unbowed
Through the realm of the dead so daring goes?"
And my sagacious Master signaled back
That aught in secret parley he would disclose.
Then as their furious wrath grew somewhat slack
They said: "Come thou alone and bid him gone
Who recklessly this kingdom dares to track.
Let him retrace his frenzied journey alone
Let him try out his wit: thou shalt stay here
Who hast to him this darkened country shown."
Think, reader, how I was then chilled by fear
When rang the accursed words—as I felt sure
I ne'er would see again the upper sphere.
"Dear Guide"—I said—"who hast made me secure
More times than seven, and unscathed brought
Out of the perils I have had to endure;
Now that I am so undone, desert me not.
Our steps so far conjoint let us retrace;
Further advance we may well leave unsought."
But he who had led me up to that place
Spoke then: "Have thou no fear, our passing through
None may prevent: from Such we hold this grace.

Wait here for me and let thy soul renew
Its strength with food of hope for a good end:
In this low world I leave not thee to rue."
Thus goes away and leaves me alone to fend
My gentle father; I, in my suspense,
Feel "yes" and "no" within my head contend.
I could not hear what were his arguments
But with the fiends he was but a short space
When, milling, they rushed back of their defense.
Those foes of ours the gate shut in the face
Of my good Master who remained without
And turned to come toward me with tardy pace.
His eyes were bent and from his brow was out
All boldness while amidst his sighs he said:
"Who has denied to me this sad redoubt?"
Then to me: "By my wrath be not misled
Into dismay: this trial I shall meet
Whatever hindrance there is hazarded.
It is not new their arrogant conceit;
At a less secret gate 'twas shown of yore
And even now that stands with bolts all split.
Thou saw'st the deadly script upon that door.
This side of it now comes—and needs no guard
To pass the circles down this abrupt shore—
One for whose sake shall be this place unbarred.

Line 4—From the outer tower two flames are shown, signaling that two souls are seeking passage. The answering flame from the inner tower indicates that the ferryman is on the way.

19—Mythological personage. He set fire to Apollo's Temple at Delphi and is punished in Hell for it.

61—A Florentine noble of great wealth who had been known for his savage temper.

69—The "citizens" of Dis are the devils, now met with for the first time. The "mighty crowds" are formed by the sinners therein punished.

70—"Minarets" suggest a strange and heathen architecture.

75—So far there has been no punishment by fire.

76—Formed by the stream of Styx.

82—The Devils.

105—From such Power (God) we have received this privilege.

125—The external gate of Hell. It is supposed that the devils resisted the coming of Christ to the Limbo.

130—An Angel is coming.

CANTO IX

ARGUMENT

Virgil, defeated in his first attempt to enter Dis, cheers Dante relating his own former successful descent to Hell and announcing the coming of help from Heaven. Soon an Angel comes, before whom opens the gate of Dis. Dante and Virgil enter and observe a wide field looking like a tomb strewn cemetery. Heretics are punished here (sixth Circle).

That color which faint heart to my face drew,
Seeing my Guide turned back from his first plan
More quickly drove within his novel hue.

He paused as bent on list'ning stands a man,
Dark air and thickly fog making his sight
Helpless to reach over a lenghty span.

"And yet we needs must conquer in this fight"
He said—"or else... such One has promised aid!
Oh! how I long to see Him here alight!"

I noticed well the way he overlaid
His starting words with those that after went:
His later words having another shade.

Yet fear within my heart was not all spent,
As I deduced from his truncated phrase
A sentence worse perhaps than what he meant.

"Here to the bottom of this doleful vase
Comes ever any down from the first ring
Where broken hope sole penalty purveys?
To this my query he said: "Only as a thing
Quite rare is any of us permitted through
This downward path I am now following.
And yet another time I came hereto
Conjured by Erichto, the fiend sinister
Who many a shade back to its body drew.
Shortly the flesh had been of me left bare
When she caused me to go inside that wall
To evoke a shade from Juda's very lair.
That is the lowest, blackest place of all
And farthest from the all-revolving heaven;
I know the road: no harm shall thee befall.
This marsh by which such fetid stench is given
All this sad city girds, where 'gainst my thought,
Only by wrath a passage can be riven."
And more he said which I remember not
As through my eyes I was all drawn and glued
On that high tower whose summit glowed red-hot,
Where, at one place, erect suddenly stood
Three hellish Furies tinted a blood-red:
Women they seemed in shape and attitude.
Green hydras 'round their waist were riveted,
Small serpents and cerastes made their hair
Which clustered thickly on each malign forehead.
He who well recognized the maids of her
Who is the crowned queen of timeless woe,
Warned me: "Behold the fierce Erynnis there.

Upon the left thou may'st Megaera know;
Weeps on the right Alecto, and Tisiphone
Stands in between." No further did he go.

With her own claws her bosom tore each one
And beat her palms and cried so loud and strange
That, fearful, near my Master I moved on.

"Let come Medusa, and he to stone shall change!"
They shouted all and looked down from their height—
—"Woe us that Theseus' stroke we failed to avenge!"

"Turn back and keep thine eyelids closéd tight,
For should the Gorgon come and shouldst thou see
Her face, thou ne'er would go back to the light."

This said, the Master forcibly turned me
Around, and of my hands not satisfied
His own, as shield, pressed on me heavily.

O ye who have sound reason for your guide,
Now for the shrouded doctrine closely look
Which these strange sounding rimes are meant to hide.

Coming already along the turbid brook
Was heard a crashing sound such that both shores,
Meseemed, as if in terror heaved and shook.

'Twas not unlike a stormy wind whose force
Is driven on by adverse heats in play:
It hits the wood and naught can stay its course.

The limbs it wrenches, smites and brings away.
Proudly it proceeds fronted by a cloud of dust
And beasts and shepherds flee its crushing sway.

Freeing my eyes said Virgil: "Now thou must,
With all thy mettle, sight that ancient flow
There, where the smoke raises a thicker gust."

As do the frogs when fleeing from their foe,
The snake, and through the water scamper fast
Till on the ground each in a heap lies low,
Like them I saw lost souls in number vast
Fleeing ahead of One whose feet unwet
At the crossing of Styx the waters passed.
Oft his left hand in front he waved, to set
His face at ease from the thick fetid air,
Only that anguish seeming to regret.
Well knowing him as Heaven's messenger
I watched my Guide whose signs to me made plain
I should keep mute and bow to such seigneur.
O, how he seemed to me full of disdain!
He approached the gate that quickly I saw reclude
Touched by his wand—as naught could him restrain.
"O ye outcasts of Heaven, spiteful brood"—
Thus he began upon that horrid sill—
"Why should ye harbor such a brazen mood?
Why should ye balk against that higher will
Whose end cannot be cleft by wrath or scorn,
And more than once has added to your ill?
Of what avail, to lift 'gainst Fate your horn?
Your Cerberus, as you have not unlearned,
For that, gullet and chin bears scarred and shorn."
Then on the filthy path his steps he turned
To us not speaking, but with countenance
Of one with other gnawing care concerned
Than that of him who in his presence stands.
As at those holy words our spirits rose,
Into the city we hastened our advance.

We entered it, as none dared us to oppose.
Scarcely within, I, for the keen desire
To observe whate'er condition in the close
Of the strong ramparts, turned myself around
And saw a field, as far as eye could peer,
Replete with sorrow and with torments dire.
As where the Rhone stagnates—to Arles near—
Or as at Pola where Quarnaro's bow
Italy closes, bathing its frontier,
The varied sepulchres so strangely strow
The ground, thus here they loomed from ev'ry part—
Only is their mode more bitter here below.
For in between the tombs are flames that dart
Up high and heat them all with fire so intense
That hotter iron asks no wordly art.
All the tomb coverings were held suspense
And as from souls in wretchéd misery
Issued forth from the graves heart-wrung laments.
Then I enquired: "My Master, who might be
The people kept within these sepulchers
And whom I hear bemoaning grievously?"
And he to me: "Here with their followers
Heresiarchs of ev'ry sect are found:
And more than thou mayest think lie here immerse.
Each one with his own kind is here flame-bound
While in the tombs the heat is more or less."
Then as upon the right his path he wound
Between the walls we passed and the distress.

Line 1—The color of fear on Dante's face drives from Virgil's face that of disappointment and rage.

24, etc.—A medieval tradition assumed that Virgil, conjured by the sorceress Erichto, had visited the very pit of Hell (Judas' very lair) to draw a soul from there. This is said to comfort Dante.

28—The highest of the seven Ptolemaic heavens.

44—Proserpina, the Queen of Hell—also the Moon.

52—Medusa's head, at whose sight men turned into stone.

54—Had they punished Theseus for his invasion of Hell, possibly Dante would not have dared to defy them.

56—Medusa was one of the Gorgons.

61, etc.—Medusa is symbol of sensual pleasure against which men's eyes must be closed by their own natural abhorrence and by the help of philosophical wisdom (symbolized in Virgil).

112—The gulf of Quarnaro on the Istrian coast.

CANTO X

ARGUMENT

Within the City of Dis, in the fiery tombs (sixth Circle) are held the Arch-heretics and other noted personages who had led a materialistic life. After meeting Farinata degli Uberti, Dante and Virgil cross the flaming field and reach the bank of a deep pit which contains the three remaining circles of Hell.

1 And now through a narrow path my Master goes
Between the walls and the tormenting fire,
While I behind his shoulders follow close.

4 "O virtue excelse who lead'st me through these dire
Circles—" then I began—"at thine own will,
Speak now and satisfy all my desire.

7 The people that within the coffers lie,
May they be seen? Already all o'er the field
The lids are lifted and no watch stands by."

10 And he to me: "All shall be shut and sealed
When back from Josaphat they to this bed
Shall bring their body which the graves shall yield.

13 In this graveyard of fire are buried
With Epicurus all his school who thought
That when the body dies, the soul is dead.

And as regards the knowledge thou hast sought
Thou shalt be here and shortly satisfied
And so as to the wish thou speakést not."
And I: "If aught I hide—O my good Guide—
Within my heart, 'tis so my words be spare
And by thy recent counsel thus abide."
"O Tuscan through this city's burning glare
Moving alive and speaking words so wise,
May it please thee a while with us to bear.
Thy mode of speech makes me clearly surmise
As thy birthplace that noble motherland
Which I too harshly did perhaps chastise."
Quite suddenly such sound came, near at hand,
Out of a coffer, causing me to haste
And closer to my Guide to take my stand.
Thereon he said to me: "Turn, why delay'st?
See Farinata there standing upright;
Thou may'st see all of him above the waist."
Already into his own was fixed my sight:
And he stood there with head erect and bust
As holding hell itself in great despite.
By ready hands and bold I felt me thrust
Amidst the sepulchers on to his place
While said my Guide: "Thy words now wisely adjust."
Soon as I reached his tomb, into my face
He peered a while and almost scornfully
He questioned me: "Who were first of thy race?"
And I, who felt all eager to comply,
Hid naught, but fully unfolded my forebears,
So that he raised his eyelids somewhat high.

And then he said: "They were most fiercely adverse
To me and to my sires and to my part,
So that two times I caused them to disperse."
"Though chased"—I answered—"they still took new heart
And did come back both of those times—as yet
Your own have mastered not so well that art."
Just then, above the uncovered parapet,
Rose by the first a shade—to its chin distent—
Upon its knees I think that it was set.
Eagerly it looked 'round me, as if it meant
To see if someone else was haply with me,
And when its expectation was all spent,
Weeping it said: "If through nobility
Of mind thou mov'st across this lampless jail,
Where is my son? Why came he not with thee?"
Then said I: "Not alone I took this trail:
He there awaiting shows to me the road,
Whom haply your Guido did to honor fail."
The words he spoke and of his pain the mode
Had spelt to me that man's name clearly enow,
Therefore so full my answer to him flowed.
Suddenly erect he cried: "Ah me! say'st thou
"He did?"—My son is then alive no more?
Sweet light no longer strikes upon his brow?"
And noting then a brief delay before
I gave him answer, down he fell supine
Nor did he stir again up from the floor.
But that great soul on whom all heed of mine
Was then engaged, changed not his countenance,
His neck turned not, nor did his flank incline.

"And if"—he said, his speech resuming once
Again—"so badly learnt that art have they
That hurts me more than e'en this fiery stance.
But hark! Ere fifty times shall a new ray
Relume that woman's face who doth here reign
Thou too shalt know how much that art can weigh.
May thou some day see the sweet world again,
Tell, why such fury is by that city shown
Against my people, in all it doth ordain?"
And I: "The horrid slaughter that brought on
With the swift stream of Arbia a crimson crest
Makes in our temple sound such orison."
I saw him shake his head and heave his breast.
"I not alone was there, and good cause made
Me move"—he said—"when I went with the rest,
But I was there alone when plans were laid
By all to level Florence to the ground,
I who alone for her fought unafraid."
"May by your seed some day repose be found"—
I said to him—"Solve ye that knot, I pray
That on this subject has my judgment bound.
It seems, if right I hear, that while you may
Perceive ahead what in its course time brings,
In present things another is the way."
"As one whose sight is faulty we see the things
In distance"—he replied—"This much of light
Grants the High Ruler in our sufferings.
When close they draw, or are, darkness of night
Surrounds our mind, and so your human lore
Save for what others tell, is past our sight.

Therefore thou see'st that there shall be no more
Knowledge of things in us, that point beyond
When of the future shall be closed the door."
I grieved then, as on me my error dawned,
And said: "Tell him who is fallen by your side
His son has not yet loosed of life the bond.
And if to him by silence I replied
Explain my act because my thoughts were all
Coiled in the error that you have untied."
I had already heard my Master call,
Therefore I urged that soul to tell me more
Quickly what others were with him in thrall.
He said: "With me a thousand lie and o'er:
The second Frederick here is buried
And so the Cardinal—I may ignore
The rest". He vanished, and with cautious tread
Back to the ancient bard I moved, oppressed
By those dark words that danger heralded.
Onward we sped and while we thus progressed,
He gently said to me: "What clouds thy brow?"
And I was quick to answer his request.
The Sage commanded: "Keep in mind what thou
Hast heard that promises to thee ill chance."
And lifting then his finger: "Mind this now:
When thou shalt look on the sweet radiance
Of her whose eye sees all, she shall not fail
To tell of thy whole life the circumstance."
Soon after that he took a leftward trail:
We left the walls and on a path that wends
To the pit center, came upon a vale
Whose noisome stench even up there offends.

Line 11—From the valley of the Final Judgment.

32—Farinata degli Uberti, a Florentine leader of the Ghibelline Party: was supposed to have been a materialist.

48—In 1248, with the help of an army sent by Frederick II, of Naples and Sicily. Again in 1260, after the battle of Monte Aperti (see below); the Guelfs, however, came back to Florence both times.

53—This is Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti, father of Guido; Guido was a poet of some note and a friend of Dante's.

63—Guido, a bon-vivant, had despised Virgil (philosophical wisdom),

79—Farinata foretells Dante's exile which was to begin in 1304, or about 50 months after the supposed time of this meeting. The Moon is known also as Proserpina, Queen of Hell.

85—The battle of Monte Aperti (1260) near Siena and on the bank of the river Arbia ended with a disastrous rout of the Florentine Guelfs.

87—Returning to power, the Florentine Guelfs made stringent laws, proclaimed also in the churches, against the Ghibellines.

91—After Monte Aperti, at a council held at Empoli—half way between Siena and Florence, the victorious Ghibellines proposed to destroy Florence and the city was saved only by the opposition of Farinata.

119—Frederick II, supposed to have followed a crass materialism.

120—Ottaviano degli Ubaldini, reported to have said: "If there is a soul I have lost it for the Ghibellines"; hence the popular opinion of his materialistic tendencies.

131—Beatrice, in Heaven.

CANTO XI

ARGUMENT

As they stop on the bank of the abyss, to get accustomed to its stench, Virgil explains to Dante the division of the remaining part of Hell—in three main circles (VII-VIII-IX) and many subdivisions. This is called the "moral topography" of Hell.

We reached a bank whose margin high and steep
Encircled with the jaggéd massiveness
Of broken rocks a more tormented heap.
And here, against the horrible excess
Of stench that from the cavern overflowed
I found, led by the Master, a recess
Back of a large tomb's lid whereon this showed
Inscribed: "Pope Anastasius here I guard
Whom drew Plotinus from the rightful road."
"Our going down 'tis proper to retard
So that we gradually inure our sense
To this foul breath, which then will not be hard."
My Master thus, and I: "Some recompense
Find then for our delay lest time be cast
Away."—and he: "My mind to that intends.

My son, beneath the heavy rocks there massed
Three circles are"—to me he then explained—
"Graded like those that thou so far hast passed.

In all of them doomed spirits are contained;
But that henceforth enough may be thy sight,
Hear how and why they find them so constrained.

All evil that the heavens must requite
Has injury for end: such end to attain
Men will afflict their kind by fraud or might.

Fraud, as an evil wholly in man's domain
More hateful is to God: the fraudulent
Further below are kept, in greater pain.

All the first circle holds the violent;
But as three persons are the aim of force,
Three tiers are built distinct in its enceinte.

To God, to self, to neighbor from this source
Injury comes: to them or to their things—
As thou shalt learn from me in plain discourse.

Forced death a man upon his neighbor brings
Or wounds him sore, or wastes his estate
By ruins, arsons or foul plunderings.

All who kill wantonly—or perpetrate
Bloodshed, lay waste or rob, in various bands
Through the first tier feel of their doom the weight.

One on himself may lay violent hands
Or on his goods—thus through the second tier
Vainly repent in their eternal stance

Who cut themselves off from your worldly sphere,
Gamble away or waste their property
And sorely grieve where they should have good cheer.

Others use force against the Deity
By scorning Nature and her rule benign,
Denying God or cursing His decree.
Therefore the lowest tier imprints its sign
On Sodom and Cahors—and on all those
Who from their heart despise the power divine.
Fraud—whose remorse every conscience knows—
One may use where a trust comes into play
Or else where such a trust does not repose.
This manner from behind appears to slay
Only that love that from nature proceeds:
In the next circle then we shall survey
Hypocrisy and flattery and all deeds
Of magic, falsehoods, thefts and simonies,
Panders and barrators and such foul breeds.
In th'other way, that love forgotten is
Which nature makes and that one added o'er
So that a special trust is born from this.
Thus in the smallest circle where the core
Is of creation and where Dis resides,
Traitors—consumed fore'er—their sin deplore."
Then I said: "Master, by well marked strides
Thy speech proceeds, and makes distinction neat
Of this abyss and what in it abides;
But tell me more: those in the greasy sleet
And those wind-tossed, and those beneath the hail,
And those that with such fierce invectives meet,
Why not within the flaming city's pale
Are they, if God is wrathful on their kind?
If not, why are they punished in this vale?"

Replied he to my query: "Why so blind
Thy wit is now, against thy former use?
Or is to something else intent thy mind?
Hast thou forgotten what so clearly issues
From those—well marked in thy Ethics' frame—
Three dispositions that God's wrath induce?
Incontinence and malice and the shame
Of mad bestiality: incontinence
Less scorning God and less deserving blame?
If thou wilt note this doctrine's inner sense
And keep in mem'ry who those people were
That suffer up above for their offense,
Thou shalt know why their place they do not share
With these miscreants and why from the mace
Of Heaven's vengeance lighter blows they bear."
"O sun that on weak sight pour'st healing rays,
Thy solving satisfies so well my thought
That doubt no less than knowledge seems a grace:
But let"—said I—" thy reasoning be brought
Back where thou say'st that usury offends
The vast goodness of God, and loose that knot."
"Philosophy if to it one well attends—"
He said—"points out, not in a single part,
But oft, how nature's course moves and depends
From the celestial mind and from its art.
Again, if well thou hast thy Physics read,
Thou shalt find out, and close to its very start,
That after that your art strives hard to tread
As scholar after master, and for this
Your art grandchild of God might well be said.

From both of these, if thou hast Genesis
In mind—where it begins—comes to our race
Its proper life and hence its progress is.
But usurers drift off on other trace
And nature—in itself and through its handmaid—
They spite, because elsewhere their hope they place.
But follow me: enough we here have stayed
On the horizon now the Pisces bond,
The Bear is all upon the Caurus laid
While the path down the bank is far beyond."

Line 8—Pope Anastasius II (elected 496 A. D.) on account of his indulgence towards some heretics, especially towards a deacon Plotinus who denied the Virgin Birth, was held to be heretical; the charge is unproven.

20—After the explanation, sight alone would tell Dante the various kinds of sinners.

25—Beasts may only use violence.

28—The first of the remaining circles (the VII) has three subdivisions: of the violents against themselves—against their neighbor—against God and Nature.

45—Wastefulness brings grief even in the world.

52—Fraud is punished in the VIII and IX circles: in the VIII are found the sinners who used Fraud "where a trust does not repose", a fraud then which attacks "from behind" only the love that proceeds from nature (56). With its ten subdivisions this circle forms the matter of the Cantos XII-XXX.

61—Fraud, in cases where "a trust comes into play" or not only against natural love but also against that born of a special relation (therefore implying a treason) is punished in the IX Circle (last four Cantos).

80—The Ethics of Aristotle.

82—The sinners of the previous circles were guilty rather of incontinence than of malice (simple fraud) or of mad bestiality (Treason).

98—Nature's course is God ordained. The "art" of the celestial mind means its mode of operation.

101—The Physics of Aristotle.

103—Human arts strive to follow and interpret nature, which is God's "art".

106—From natural forces and from human arts comes the progress of the race.

109—Usurers expect to make money out of money, not through any natural growth or artisan's work. Genesis III, 16: "With labor and toil shalt thou eat".

113—The constellation of Pisces comes up the horizon (this takes place shortly before sunrise) and respectively Ursa Major, the Bear, is over the North-west: a point called Caurus by the Latins.

CANTO XII

ARGUMENT

The travelers avoid the Minotaur guarding the descent to the abyss and reaching the bottom they find themselves on the bank of a river of seething blood. Troops of Centaurs patrol the river bank. This is the first subdivision of the VII Circle containing the Violent against others: tyrants and robbers.

That place we reached in quest of downward track
Alp-like appeared and Such was there, beside,
That any sight would have been ta'en aback.
As south of Trento shows that ruinous slide
That hard upon its flank swift Adige hit
—Caused by earthquake or shoring from it pried—
And from the mountain top whence it was split
Sheer rocks are left down to the valley bed
Which hardly a path to one above permit:
Such was the way that to that bottom led:
And on the margin where the rocks were shorn
We saw the shame of Crete there lay outspread
Which from the spurious cow of old was born.
And when he saw us coming, rabidly
His flesh he gnawed as one by anger torn.

Said then the Sage of mine: "Thinkest, maybe,
That here the Duke of Athens comes again,
He who up in the world brought death to thee?
Move off, vile beast, because to this domain
Not by thy sister taught this man arrives,
But goes through here only to see your pain."
As does a bull that haply breaks his gyves
After he has received the mortal blow,
And cannot run, but a few bonds contrives,
I saw the Minotaur then leaping so.
Cried Virgil wisely: "For the pass now jump;
While thus he raves, 'tis well to get below."
Thus we began our way down o'er the dump
Of those great stones, that often shook impelled
Under my feet, by the unaccustomed thump.
"Thou thinkest of this cavern sentinelled"—
His words the fancies of my mind thus met—
"By that dishuman wrath I just have quelled.
Know then that when for the first time I set
My feet upon this path through Hell's lower ground
This rock thou see'st had not been broken yet.
But certes shortly—if is my judgment sound—
Before came here He who retrieved from Dis
The mighty prey held in the upper round,
Trembled in all its parts the foul abyss
So hard that all creation, I then thought,
Was stirred by love—as some affirm that this
Several times back into chaos has brought
The world. 'Twas then that in this ridge of old
Here and elsewhere was such upheaval wrought.

But look down to the bottom and behold
The stream of blood, now near. Any that hath
Done harm by force those boiling waves enfold."
O blind cupidity, O foolish wrath
By which in our short life we are so spurred
And, in the eternal, steeped in such a bath!
I saw an ample foss belike a gird
That with its arc the plain entire embraced,
As from my escort wise I had just heard.
Between the foss and the high bank there raced
Centaurs in file, with shafts on bow-strings pressed
As in the world above their prey they chased.
Perceiving us, came all of them to a rest
And shortly from the troop I saw three start
With chosen shafts and bows ready at their breast.
And from afar one shouted: "In what part
Is set your doom, ye who come down that hill?
Answer from there or I shall loose my dart."
My Master said to him: "Our answer will
Be made to Chiron standing there by thee.
Too eager always wert—for thine own ill!"
Then, nudging me: "Thou see'st there Nessus, he
Who for fair Dejanira's love was slain
And his own fate avenged so cruelly.
That looking downward, 'mid those other twain
Great Chiron is, Achilles' prudent nurse;
Pholus the last, feared for his rage insane.
Thousands of them add to that foss a curse:
Quickly are the spirits by their arrows speared
If they move out from where they should be immerse."

Those agile beasts I and my Master neared:
Chiron took out an arrow, drew in place
The notch and pushed back of his jaw his beard.
Thus his great mouth uncovered he displays,
Then to his mates: "Did you note the fact
That things are moved by him of slower pace?
Feet of dead men are not so wont to act."
Already my good Guide stood up to plead
Reaching the breast where are both forms compact.
"Indeed he lives and him, alone, I lead
Down this dark valley to the nethermost.
Pleasure does not move us but his own need.
Where Alleluja is sung One left her post
Coming to entrust me this new embassy;
He is not a thief, nor I a robber's ghost.
Now for that virtue by whose order I
Thus move my steps and this wild road I dare
One of thy troop give us who shall stand by
To show where is the fording and to bear
Upon his back my charge—as for his weight
Cannot he, like a spirit, waft on air."
Swerving on his right breast, Chiron his mate
Nessus commanded: "Turn and be their guide;
If other troops you meet, their zeal abate."
We started, by the trusty escort's side
Along the margin of the crimson flood
Wherein the scalded spirits loudly cried.
Covered to their eyebrows I saw a squad
Of whom the Centaur said: "There tyrants stay
Whose hands for booty were eager and for blood.

Thus for their ruthless outrages they pay.
There Alexander, Dionysius there,
Who held o'er Sicily long, direful sway.
That brow so clustered with a thick black hair
Is Azzolino, and that flaxen head
Obizzo d'Esti—truth to tell, howe'er
His slayer was the son he had not bred."
Here spoke the Poet at my mute request:
"Let him be first—I stand in second stead."
Shortly beyond I saw the Centaur rest
His eyes upon a crowd that with their throat
Stood of the seething stream above the crest.
Pointing to a shade from all the rest remote
He said: "Mark him; right in the house of God
The heart yet honored on the Thames he smote."
Others I saw who held above the blood
Their head and e'en their trunk, and many I knew
Whom I had met when the world's path they trod.
Thus lower and lower the channel level grew
Until the sinners' feet only it would bake:
And here took place our fording of the slough.
"As from this side thou see'st"—the Centaur spake—
"The boiling stream decrease to a lower line,
Thus thou for very truth my word must take
That on this other, more and more the incline
Slopes of the bottom till again the tide
Reaches the height where tyranny must pine.
Heaven's high justice goads upon this side
Attila, on earth a scourge: with him stand there
Pyrrhus and Sextus—tears no instant dried

Shed there—wrung by the seethe—that evil pair
Rinieri Pazzo and he of Corneto, both
For fouling your highways with such warfare."
Then he turned back and crossed again the froth.

Line 12—The Minotaur, half man and half bull, who lived in the island of Crete. He was born of Pasiphae, wife of Minos the King of Crete.

17—Theseus.

20—Ariadne, born of Pasiphae and Minos. She led Theseus out of the Cretan labyrinth after he had slain the Minotaur.

38, etc.—At the hour of the death of Christ, who then took from the Limbo the "mighty prey", or the great souls held there somewhat in subjection to Dis, or Lucifer.

42—Empedocles claims that the elements seeking their own kind ("love" may be here understood as chemical affinity) plunged several times the world into chaos.

67—Nessus, killed by Hercules for the love of Dejanira. Nessus' shirt, left by him to Dejanira with the pretense that it would keep the wearer from other loves, was given by her to Hercules. A poison in the shirt caused Hercules' death.

71—Chiron who taught Achilles.

88—Beatrice, coming from Heaven.

107—Perhaps Alexander the Great. Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse.

110, etc.—Small tyrants in northern Italy. (XIII century).

112—Obizzo was slain by a supposed son of his, who was not truly his issue.

114—Virgil answers the unspoken question of Dante: "Let Nessus now be thy first Mentor".

119—Guy of Montfort who slew Prince Henry of England at Viterbo (1271). Henry's heart was placed in Westminster Abbey.

134, etc.—Attila, king of the Huns, "the scourge of God". Pyrrhus, possibly the King of Epirus who fought the Romans. Sextus, probably Sextus Tarquinius, king of Rome.

136—Rinieri Pazzo, Rinieri of Corneto, famous highway robbers of Dante's times.

CANTO XIII

ARGUMENT

In the second subdivision of the VII Circle Dante and Virgil are confronted with the souls of the Violent against themselves—suicides and wastrels. The souls inhabit the trunks of trees.

Not yet had Nessus reached the other side
When the Master and I set out through a wood
Where no trace of a path could be descried.
No verdant foliage there, but darkly hued,
No branches smooth, but crooked and gnarled that yield
No fruits, but poison through sharp thorns exhude.
No such hard brambles in their thickets shield—
Between Corneto and Cecina—the herds
Of savage beasts that hate the cultured field.
Harpies here make their nest, those ghoulish birds
Who from the Strophades once chased the race
Of Troy, predicting woe with doleful words.
Broad wings they have, and human neck and face;
Clawed are their feet and plumed their belly vast—
Upon the trees they wail their dismal lays.
Then my good Master said: "Before thou hast
Proceeded further, thou must understand
That to the second round we now have passed:

Through it we move down to the horrid sand.
Look sharp therefore, as things now shall appear
That would my sermon as untruthful brand."

From ev'ry side a groaning I could hear
Nor from what souls it came my sight could find
So that I stopped by wonder struck and fear.

I believe that he thought I had in mind
That all the moans among the trunks came from
Some wretchéd souls who hid, the trees behind.

Then spoke my Master: "Shouldst thou break off some
Light splintering from any of these plants
Thy present thoughts all baseless will become."

At that, I dared my hand a bit to advance
And from a thorny bush I plucked a joint
While its trunk cried: "Why so tear me thy hands?"

Then while with blood imbrowned the loppéd point:
"Why break'st me thou?"—sighing, again it said—
"What has from thee all charity purloined?

Brambles we are, but a man's body we had.
Indeed more piteous should thy hand have been
If souls of serpents we had been instead."

As when burns at one end a brand still green,
Drips on the other, and a hissing sound
Is made by air escaping from within,

Thus did together from that splintered wound
Both words and blood issue, so that I let
The tip fall down, and stood as terror-bound.

"If short of proof this thing could faith beget,
O injured soul—" My Sage thus to his plea—
"Although the same that in my rhymes he met,

His hand would never have stretched out to a tree,
But the incredible thing led me to lend
Counsel to a thing which weighs even on me.
But tell him who thou art, that for amend
He may relume thy name with a fresh glow
In the world where again he may ascend."
The trunk: "With thy sweet words thou lur'st me so
That I must needs reply, and you forbear
If, in my speech enmeshed, diffuse I grow.
I am the one who kept into his care
Both keys to Frederick's heart and was so suave
My hand to shut and ope, that my Seigneur
Almost all others from his secrets drave.
Faithful to my great charge I paid the price
When veins and pulses for its sake I gave.
That harlot who has ne'er her strumpet eyes
Withheld from roving within Caesar's hall—
A common death, and of all courts the vice—
Against my person fired the minds of all
And those thus fired so fired my Prince august
That honor's joys turned into mourning's gall.
And I through my disdain and my disgust,
Believing that by death disdain I would flee,
Against my justice I became unjust
For the new roots that anchor here this tree
I swear that the high trust I ne'er betrayed
Which my Seigneur, so worthy, placed on me.
If ever one of you shall climb the grade
Back to the world, let him my name restore
Which now by envy's stroke so low is laid."

A while awaiting—: "Since his words are o'er—"
The Poet spoke to me—"our time waste not
But speak, and what thou wishest ask him for."
And I to him: "Ask him thyself for aught
Thou thinkest would my wishes satisfy;
I couldn't, as pity has my heart distraught."
Then he, resuming: "May this man comply
Freely with the prayer in thy speech contained,
O fettered spirit, tell us by what tie—
I beg of thee—a soul is here constrained
Within these knots, and, if thou canst, tell too
If e'er a soul was from these limbs unchained."
Hard from the trunk the hissing splutter blew
And then that wind into this voice made shift:
"An answer briefly shall be given you.
The ruthless soul soon as it goes adrift
Self-wrenchéd from the body where it dwelt,
Is sent by Minos to the seventh rift.
It strikes without set place this wooded belt
And where it happens to be thrown by chance
There it starts sprouting like a grain of spelt;
Thus grow our saplings and our forest plants.
Feeding on the green leaves the Harpies then
Pain, and to pain a vent, produce at once.
We, like all souls, shall come, our spoils of men
To take, but not to wear, it being wrong
What has been spurnéd, to receive again.
Hereto our corpses we shall drag along
And through the dismal wood hung they shall be
Each at the thorn its hateful soul has sprung."

While still we were attending to the tree
Thinking it was about to speak some more,
By crashing noise we were struck suddenly.
As hunter who is list'ning for the boar
That comes, pressed by the chase, on toward his post—
And hears the branches crash and the beasts roar—
We saw two spirits come from the left coast,
Nakéd and torn, on such a headlong run
That broke whatever branches their path crossed.
The one ahead: "Come on, now, Death, come on—"
The other, seeming of his sloth afraid,
Cried: "Lano; smart indeed thy legs have grown
Since when on Toppo's field the jousts were played!"
His wind then haply failing for the strain,
Of him and of a bush a pile he made.
Behind the two was filled the wooded plain
With bitches black of skin, eager and grim
And running as greybounds freed from their chain.
The one who hid soon felt their teeth, and him
They lacerated into many a shred
Carrying off every sorry limb.
Then giving me his hand, my escort led
To that torn bush which vainly cried its wail
And through its many wounds in large drops bled.
"James of Saint Andrew"—it said—"to what avail
Didst for a shield to my green limbs resort?
What guilt have I for what thy sins entail?"
Over the bush my Master stopping short,
Said: "Who wert thou whose words full of despair
Out of so many points with thy blood snort?"

And he to us: "O souls who here did fare
To witness this mad slaughter and this shame
For which of all my boughs I am left bare,
Gather them at the foot of my sad frame.
The Baptist's city once I calléd mine;
For him she changed her early patron's name
And he for that will always make her pine.
And but for this that yet not all is gone
There, over Arno's pass, his ancient sign
The citizens who built again upon
The ruin that Attila left in his raid
Would have in vain their work caused to be done.
For me a gibbet of my house I made."

Line 8—The Cecina is a small river emptying into the sea not far from Leghorn (Tuscany). Corneto is a small Tuscan town.

10—Aeneas and his followers in their journey from Troy to Italy landed on the islands called Stophades. They were chased from there by the Harpies who predicted grave misfortunes to them.

19—Till the third subdivision, a plain of burning sand.

48—A similar scene is described in *Aeneid* V.

58—Piero della Vigna, chancellor to Frederick II of Naples and Sicily (see *Inf.* X, 118). Listening to some courtiers' accusations, the Emperor had his eyes burnt out and threw him into prison. He killed himself smashing his head against a wall.

64—Envy.

120—A citizen of Siena, famed as a wastrel. Died in a battle against the Aretines (1297) near a town called Toppo.

133—From Padua. Died in 1239 after dissipating a large estate.

139, etc.—Probably a Rocco de' Mozzi, from Florence, who hanged himself in one of his houses.

143—Florence, whose patron is St. John the Baptist. Mars was protector of the city in pre-christian times. A mutilated statue of the god was still in Dante's time upon the Old Bridge on the Arno. Dante probably means that a remnant of martial spirit in the Florentines had kept their city in existence.

CANTO XIV

ARGUMENT

The travelers survey a plain of burning sand on which falls a rain of fire. Here are the Blasphemers, or Violent against God, within the third section of the VII Circle. As they reach a stream, Virgil explains to Dante the origin of the various rivers in Hell.

As love for my own land stabbed me with acute
Pangs, I collected the tree's broken parts
Giving them back to him who now was mute.
We came then to the limit that disparts
The second from a lower tier and where
Justice displays other horrendous arts.
That I may well the novel things declare,
I say that we came now upon a weald
Whose floor of any plant is wholly bare.
By the dark forest's wreath its bounds are sealed
As by the fosse is girt the wooded land;
And here we held our steps 'twixt wood and field.
The soil was like an arid and thick sand
Similar to the shore which in their flight
Pressed down the feet of Cato and of his band.

Ah, how God's vengeance should fill all with fright
Who reading these my lines become aware
Of what was then made patent to my sight.

Large flocks of souls, all nakéd, I saw there,
And all of them were weeping bitterly
Though bearing of that woe a various share.

Of them, some on the ground supine did lie
While others squatting close together clung:
Others around were going endlessly.

The walking spirits formed the greatest throng
And those recumbent the least large of all
But to their woe these had a much freer tongue.

Upon the sandy waste rained slowly a fall
Of fire in widespread flakes that never slacked
As drops on windless height the snow's soft pall.

As Alexander in the hottest tract
Of India saw such flames fall on his camp
Which till they touched the ground remained compact,

So that he ordered all his troops to tramp
About the soil as thus the vapor's blaze
By single sparks was found easier to stamp—

Thus pours the eternal fire upon that place
And kindles all the sand, as doth the steel
Striking the flint, thus causing pain two ways.

Without a pause went on the maddened reel
Played by those wretchéd hands that tried to shield
Ever new flaming darts, from head to heel.

Then I began: "O Master, to whom yield
All things save the hard fiends that at the main
Gate of this city against us took the field,

Who is that huge one there that shows disdain,
Through scowls and writhings, for the ceaseless flame,
So that he lies unripened by the rain?"

Soon as he noticed that I asked his name
From my good Leader, instantly he cried:
"As in my life, in death I am the same.

Jove may well tire his workman who supplied
The lightning keen that in his rage he threw
The day that struck but not yet tamed I died.

Or he may work in turns and tire the crew
In Mongibello's forge dark as the night
Shouting: Good Vulcan, help—as if anew

He were engaged in that Phlegraean fight,
Shooting at me with all his strength and hate—
In his revenge he shall have small delight."

Then spoke my Guide, and in such tones irate
As never I had heard from him before:
"O Capaneus, because does not abate

Thy prideful wrath, thou art here punished more.
No torment save thine own unending rage
Would of thy fury pay in full the score."

Then spoke to me with softer lip my Sage,
Saying: "He was among the seven Kings
Besieging Thebes; time seems not to assuage

His hate of God on whom seemingly he flings
His scorn; but his ill mood, as I have said
Unto his breast as proper ornament clings.

Now follow me and see thou dost not tread
But where the fire within the sand is chilled.
Keep with thy feet well to the wood, instead."

We came to a place where a small stream is spilled
Out of the wood and by its crimson hues
My mind is even now with horror filled.

As out of Bulicame runs a sluice
Whose waters then the sinful women share
Thus down that arid sand went the red ooze.

When seeing that its bed and both banks were
Stone-built, and so the margins on each side,
I understood the passage to be there.

"Of all strange things on which I clarified
Thy wond'ring mind since through that gate we passed
Whose threshold to no one is e'er denied,

Upon a thing thine eyes have not been cast
Notable as the stream that here flows by
Upon whose waves none of the flames may last."

From my good Leader came such words, and I
Eagerly begged of him to grant the food
For which he had my yearning stirréd high.

"Midsea lies now in ruined solitude"—
Said he—"a land called Crete; under its King
In olden times the world was chaste and good.

A mountain rises there, once flourishing
With streams and boughs—which Ida was yclept—
And is deserted now as blighted thing.

There as in sheltered cradle Rhea kept
Her growing child, and him better to screen
She caused a great outcry whene'er he wept.

A great old man stands up—the mount within—
His shoulders toward Damietta—as into a glass,
His eyes are fixed on Rome, o'er the marine.

All of his head is of fine gold a mass,
Pure silver are his arms and so his breast,
And down unto the crotch he is made of brass.
Of chosen iron formed is all the rest
Save his right foot of bakéd clay, and more
This than the other by his weight is pressed.
Every part except the golden ore
Is cracked by a fault, and through it tears are shed
Which, gathered, through the cavern's bottom bore.
Their course cascades down to the valley bed,
Forms Acheron and Styx and Phlegethon,
Then through this gullet further down is sped.
Reaching the point than which no lower is known
It makes Cocytus and what lake that is
I shall not say: to thee it shall be shown."
And I to him: "If from our world comes this
That courses at our feet, why wasn't it found
Earlier than at this margin of the abyss?"
And he to me: "Thou know'st the place is round
And though thy path has been much more inclined
To the left hand, e'er to the bottom bound,
Not yet did it 'round the whole circle wind;
Thus if new sights for thee here still remain,
It should not cause a wonder in thy mind."
"Where then is Lethe"—questioned I again—
"And Phlegethon, for thou of that say'st naught
And only of this that it comes of this rain."
"Pleasure to me is by thy questions brought,
Always"—he said—"but the red seething wave
On that last point, methinks, should clear thy thought.

Thou shalt see Lethe, but beyond this cave,
Where, when the sin has been all ta'en away
After repentance, the souls go to lave."
He added then: "No longer need we stay
Close to the forest; follow my descent.
Our path, the margins free from that hot spray
And over which is ev'ry vapor spent."

Line 15—Cato, with the remnants of Pompey's army retreated across the Libyan desert.

31—Refers to a legend concerning the march of Alexander the Great towards India.

44—At the gate of Dis Virgil had been balked by the devils (see Canto VIII).

51, etc.—Capaneus, one of the seven Kings who besieged Thebes. Fought with the Giants against Jove, being conquered in the battles of Phlegra, a valley in Thessaly.

56—Mongibello, or Aetna, the volcano in Sicily, where Vulcan was said to have his forge and to prepare lightnings for Jove.

79—Bulicame, a stream near Viterbo (Roman province). Out of it water was deflected to some bath-houses used by diseased people and by street women who were forbidden other places. The Bulicame is of a somewhat red color and gives sulphureous fumes.

95—King Minos.

100—Rhea was the wife of Saturn and mother of Jove. As Saturn was trying to devour his children, Rhea kept Jove concealed in the island with orders to those about him to raise a noise to drown the crying of the infant.

103—The "great old man" is somewhat related to the vision of the prophet Daniel, but Dante makes him a symbol of Time and of the succeeding human generations.

104—Damietta, in Aegypt, cradle of ancient civilization: Rome, of the new.

118—The center of the earth.

134—The very stream along which they are walking.

CANTO XV

ARGUMENT

While walking on the stone parapet between the stream and the burning sand, the poets are met by a group of the Violent against Nature (Sodomites); fourth section of Circle VII.

We now proceed on one of those hard banks
While from the river lifts a cloud of blear
Smoke, saving from the fire its waves and flanks.
'Twixt Ghent and Bruges much the same barrier
The Flemish raise against the rushing tide
Keeping away the sea whose might they fear.
Castles and towns to shield, such dams provide
The Paduans 'gainst Brenta's overflows
When warmed by Spring is Chiarentana's side.
In such a semblance were erected those,
But, whoever their builder might have been,
Not quite so high and thick the banks there rose.
We had now put a lengthy space between
The wood and us; back I'd have turned in vain
To find the place where I the wood had seen.

And here we met new souls in a long train
Sidling along the bank, each peering through
The mist at us, as at each other crane
The passers-by, the eve the moon is new.
And as old tailor into a needle's eye,
Those shades appeared their brow toward us to screw.
I was surveyed thus by that family
Till one knew me; I felt him grab the fold
Of my robe and—"What wonder!"—heard him cry.
As with his arm outstretched he made his bold
Appeal, in his sere traits I fixed my glance
So that his scorchéd looks did not withhold
From me the knowing of his countenance.
And on his own bending my face, anon
I answered: "Sir Brunetto, is here your stance?"
Then he up spoke: "May it please thee, my son,
If Brunetto Latini a while his way
Makes back with thee and lets his file go on."
And I: "With all my heart for this I pray,
And here with you I shall be pleased to sit,
If he grants this whose word I must obey."
"My son, should any of us himself permit
To stop—" he said—"he then must lie five scores
Of years, while him the flames unshielded hit.
Proceed, and at thy heels, matching thy course
I shall then join my troop on this hot pike
That, pauseless, its eternal loss deplores."
I did not dare to step down from the dike
To walk along his side, but bent my head
And went along as one reverent-like.

"What fate or chance"—with eager words he said—
"Brings thee to this low place ere thy last day
And who is he by whom thy steps are led?"
"Above in the clear world I went astray—"
I answered—" finding me in a dark vale
Before my age had covered all its way.
But yester-morn I 'scaped, only to fail;
And falling back, I then met with this man
Who brings me home over this woeful trail."
And he to me: "Aim where thy star leads on
And thou shalt reach a glorious goal, as even
I had surmised when fair my life still ran.
Had I not been so soon to my death driven,
Seeing the heavens to thee so benign
Some comfort to thy work I would have given.
But that ungrateful people and malign
That anciently came down from Fiesole—
And still of rock and mountain bears the sign—
Shall thy good deeds with hatred e'er repay;
For 'midst the acid sorbs it is not right
That sweet fig tree should its ripe fruits display.
Of old they are famous for their crookéd sight:
A people full of envy, pride and greed.
Clean of their customs from thyself the blight.
But thy fortune this honor shall concede:
While hungrily for thee both sides shall long,
Past reach of either goat shall be the feed.
Let those beasts that from Fiesole have sprung
Make litter of themselves, but let them spare
The plant, if any still lives in their dung

Through which into some blossoms might yet bear
The noble seed of Rome that there remained
When of such malice it became the lair."

"Had my desire its ripe fulfillment gained—"
I answered him—"you would not have as yet
From human nature banishment sustained.

For in my mind is fixed and with regret
Even now fills my heart your suave and fond
Paternal image, when long hours we met

And you taught me how man may live beyond
The bounds of time; and to your loving care
Shall, till my death, my grateful tongue respond.

I note your words that on my future bear
And keep with other texts to be made plain
By Lady all-knowing, if I rise to her.

But this I want you firmly to retain:
When is my conscience pure and unafraid
Fortune will deal to me her blows in vain.

Even 'fore now such earnest has been paid
To me, but I care not how Fortune plies
Her wheel at pleasure, and the villein his spade."

Then my good Master turned around his eyes
Upon his right, and looked at me and spake:
"He listens well who minds a sound advice."

Meantime my step and sleep I do not break
With Sir Brunetto, asking him to tell
What great and famous men tread the same wake.

And he to me: "To know of some 'tis well,
But of the rest 'tis better naught to say;
Time would be short on all of them to dwell.

This is enough that clerics all they were
And scholars great to whom the world has bowed:
Tainted with sin in the same reeking way.
Priscian is going with that sorry crowd
And Francesco d'Accorso; there, too, ranged—
Hadst thou desired to see such evil-browed
Fellow—was the man to Bacchiglione changed
From Arno, by the Servants' Servant; there
He left his nerves, from righteousness so estranged.
I would say more, but can no longer share
My speech and walk with thee, as now I see
New clouds that from the sand upon us bear.
New people come with whom I must not be;
My own "Tesoro" in thy good care I place:
Therein I live—I make no other plea."
Then he turned back and at so fast a pace
As that of those who run for the green flag
Across Verona's country, and in that race
He seemed the winner, not of those who lag.

8—The Brenta flows toward Padua from the Carinthian Alps (Chiarentana) in North Italy.

12—Those embankments in Hell were not so massive.

23—The poets were on the bank above, the shades below.

30—Sir Brunetto Latini, a former teacher of Dante. Literary man of some note.

61—The Florentines: Florence was supposed to have been founded as a colony from the nearby Etruscan hill town of Fiesole.

67—Tuscan proverbial saying, chiding the Florentines for having got the worst of a certain bargain with the Pisans.

71—Both factions dividing Florence.

89—Beatrice, in Heaven.

94—Dante had already received some hints as to his future troubles.

109—Priscian, an ancient Greek grammarian.

110—A Florentine scholar. Held a chair at Bologna's University.

112—Andrea de' Mozzi, Bishop of Florence (on the Arno) in 1287—transferred by the Pope (the Servants' Servant) to Vicenza (on the Bacchiglione) in 1295.

119—Sir Brunetto's chief literary work.

122—A famous race run annually at Verona. The goal was marked by a green flag.

CANTO XVI

ARGUMENT

The Poets have arrived quite near the point where Phlegethon falls over a sheer abyss, at the bottom of which they will find Circle VIII. They meet some others of the Sinners against Nature. After a signal by Virgil a strange monster appears at the brink of the abyss; on the monster's shoulders the two will descend.

Where the stream waters fall I now am coming,
On the next circle's brim, and hear a boom
That sounds like that of many hives a-humming;
When to my sight three shades together loom
Running out of a band that struggled by
Under the rain of their horrendous doom.
They came toward us, and soon I heard them cry:
"Stand thou aside who from our city of sin
Seem'st to have come, if thy dress does not lie."
Alas, what sores I saw deep in their skin
Which recent flames and old therein had burned!
E'en now that sorrow flares, my memory within—
Attending to their cries my Doctor turned
His eyes to me and said: "Now must we wait,
For courtesy to them should not be spurned.

And were it not the land's natural state
That shooting fire, more proper I would say
To thee and not to them a hurried gait."

As we thus paused, their ancient wailing they
Took up again and standing right below
All three in a ring wheeled 'round in rapid way.

As champions did, their nakéd body a-glow,
Watching for hold and vantage ere they lept
Against each other to deal blow for blow,

Thus did those three, as wheeling 'round they kept
Their eyes on me—their neck held ever bent
Against the journey on which their footfalls stept.

"Ah, if this putrid place with woe besprent"—
One said—" and our own face scorched and flame-browned
Towards us and towards our prayers makes pity ill spent,

Perhaps our names, up in the world renowned,
May prompt the telling who thou art whose feet
So safe are scraping this infernal ground.

This one whose traces, as thou see'st, I beat
Though nothing now but nude and hairless shame
Was worthy indeed more than thou may'st conceit.

Of good Gualdrada the grandchild, his name
Was Guido Guerra and while he lived, for deeds
Of arms and wisdom gained a widespread fame.

This other who after me the sand thus kneads
Was good Tegghiaio, Aldobrandi's pride:
Surely to him the world high praise concedes.

And I who am with them here crucified
Was Jacob Rusticucci and for my dire
Doom, above all I blame my savage bride."

Had I then had some cover from the fire
I would have rushed to them down from my place
And, certes, not against my Guide's desire.
But with those darting flames before my face
By fear of burning was the wish suppress
That made me hunger after their embrace.
"Not scorn indeed"—the three I then addrest—
"But for your fate great pity stabbed me through—
Such as but slowly may fade from my breast—
When sight of you from this my Doctor drew
Such words that made me think I should look for
The coming of famed gentry such as you.
I am from your own city and o'er and o'er
I heard your names and many a glorious feat
And often I retold that glorious lore.
I leave the gall for fruits that will be sweet
Promised to me by this my truthful Guide,
But first to reach the center it is meet."
"May yet for a long time thy limbs abide
Thy soul's commands"—that spirit answered then—
"And after thee may yet thy fame spread wide,
Tell: courtesy still and valor have the men
Of our and thine own city, as in the past,
Or is that now wholly beyond their ken?
For Guglielmo Borsiere, among the last
To drop down here—he goes with yonder train—
With his report deep grief on us did cast."
"Alas, new blood and chance for sudden gain
A pride beyond all reckoning have bred,
Florence, in thee, and now thou wail'st in vain."

This much I cried, while holding high my head,
And they who took those words as my reply
Looked as do men when a hard truth is said.
"May it ne'er cost thee more to satisfy
All who may question thee"—as one they spoke—
"Happy thou art whose mind to words may fly!
Shouldst thou from these dark field thy 'scape yet make
And see again the heavens star-impearled
In saying—I was there—joy shalt thou take.
Recall our names to those up in the world".
Their circle here they broke and so fast ran
That their legs seemed to fly as wings unfurled.
Not even an Amen in such brief span
Of time could sound, and lost to sight they were.
Then thought my Master well to hasten on.
He advanced a while with me his follower
And came so near the boom of the cascade
That of our voices we were hardly aware.
And as that stream whose proper course is laid
First from Mount Veso toward the eastern shore
Proceeding down on Appennine's left grade—
Stillwater it is called up there, before
Upon the valley its lower channel lies,
But at Forlì it has that name no more—
By the Alp of Saint Benedict the skies
Rends with its roar while plunging at one leap
Where for some thousands should a hospice rise,
Thus over a ravine all craggy and steep
That tinted stream loud-bellowing we found,
And there no ear its power for long could keep.

I had a cord girding my body around
With which I had at times hoped to reduce
That panther vari-skinned and hold it bound.
Soon as I had it all from me made loose,
According to the order of my Guide,
I handed it all coiled for him to use.
And leaning on the right upon his side
With a quick casting, o'er the precipice
Beyond the brink he threw it somewhat wide.
"Now certes must respond some novelties"—
I said within myself—" to that new sign
Of which the Master such keen watcher is."
From utmost caution men should ne'er decline
When close to such that not alone the mere
Deed may perceive but thought itself divine.
He said to me: "Soon That shall come up here
Which I await, and solve thy fancy's dream
When to thy sight his shape shall plainly appear."
When truth and lie of equal semblance seem,
Truth speaking should be e'er by men abhorred
Lest, guiltless, they may lose common esteem.
But now I must needs speak, and for each word,
Of this my Comedy, reader, I do swear—
—And may to it the world long grace accord—
I saw then through that dim and thickened air
A swimming figure reach the upper shore
Whose sight the stoutest heart would hardly bear,
As he returns who dove below and tore
Away an anchor from its grappling hold
On rock or else that hides on the sea floor—
His head springs up, and his legs upwards fold.

Line 9—Dante was dressed in the flowing robe of the Florentine nobles.

20—Below the embankment on which the Poets were standing.

22—Wrestlers and pugilists: such games had been abolished in most of the Christian lands.

37—A Florentine lady married into the family of the Counts Guidi of Casentine. The name is a corruption of Ingertrude.

38—Guido Guerra of the Counts Guidi; a famous warrior. Helped Charles of Anjou in his campaign against Manfredi, son of Frederick II.

41, etc.—Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, a Florentine noble. Jacob Rusticucci, another Florentine; reported to have married unhappily.

63—The center of the earth.

70—Another notable Florentine.

94, etc.—The river Stillwater has its source on the eastern or Adriatic side of the Appennine. When it reaches the city of Forlì it is called Montone. At the place in the Appennine Alps where it plunges to the valley below there is a Convent—the Abbey of Saint Benedict. In Dante's time the convent was almost deserted while it might have been the hospice of thousands.

106—Dante, belonging to the Third Order of Saint Francis, wore a cord around his loins as symbol of penitence: with it he had hoped to conquer his own luxury. The panther is the same as the leopardess of Canto I.

131—Geryon; see following Canto.

133—As diver swims up after freeing an anchor caught on the bottom.

CANTO XVII

ARGUMENT

While Virgil is treating with Geryon, Dante visits some other sinners—still in Circle VII, who are sitting on the burning sand. These are the Usurers, sinners against Nature and Art.

"Behold the beast with the keen-pointed tail:
It cleaves the hills, wrecks walls and arms of man
And with its stench doth the whole world enveil."
With such a speech to me my Guide began,
Then signaled to the beast to come ashore
Close to the stones we had been walking on.
And Fraud's foul image then advanced before
My eyes and landed with his head and bust
While off the bank his tail was dangling o'er.
His face was of a man in semblance just,
So fair his skin appeared—his body, instead,
Seemed of a serpent by its shape and crust.
Two hairy paws from his arm-pits out spread
And all his back and breast and either side
With colored nodes and rings was garnished.

Never Tartar or Turk to a cloth applied—
On background or relief—such varied hues,
Nor could Aracne's loom such weaves provide.
As on the beach small boats, when not in use,
Partly rest on the water, partly on land,
Or as up there among the gluttonous
Germans, the beaver takes his battle stand,
Thus there that worst of beasts had ta'en a grip
On the stone-covered edge hemming the sand.
Upon the void his tail did freely flip
And upward rolled its poison laden end
That looked as scorpion's tail with forkéd tip.
Then said my Leader: "Now we must needs bend
Our way a while until we reach down where
Thou see'st that evil beast his limbs distend."
Going below, on our right breast we bear
And for ten steps the very edge we skim
As, further in, the sand and flames deter.
And when we had arrived quite close to him
I saw some souls but shortly away who sate
Upon the sand close to the ruinous rim.
Here said my Guide: "That knowledge adequate
Thou gain about the souls of ev'ry sort
Within this round, go now and see their state".
And added: "Make with them thy sermon short;
I shall bespeak with This till thy return
That he may lend his shoulders for support."
Thus on that seventh circle's utmost bourne
I still move on, and all alone I toil
Up to the place where those new people mourn.

Out of their eyes their sorrow seemed to boil
The while their hands rushed here and there to beat
Now 'gainst the vapor, now 'gainst the hot soil.

Not otherwise during the summer heat
Dogs bit by flies or fleas or by gadflies
Belabor with their muzzle or their feet.

When upon some of those I fixed my eyes
Who from the pelting fire receive their curse,
I could amidst that throng none recognize,

But saw about their neck a hanging purse
Of certain color and with certain crest
On which the sinners' eyes appeared to nurse.

Then as among that crowd went on my quest
I saw a yellow purse with azure dight
Which of a lion the bold form expressed.

And as upon its course kept on my sight
Another I beheld on field blood-red
Showing a goose much more than butter white.

And one whose little sac showed forth, bespread
On white, a pregnant sow in azure traced:
"What art thou doing in this ditch?"—then said.

"Go now and as thou art by life still graced,
Know that my neighbor Vitaliano shall
Be at his station on my left soon placed.

A Paduan I while these from Florence all;
And often thunder on my ears their shrieks:
—Let the most noble knight come to his stall,

On whom shall hang the pouch with the three beaks."
Screwing his mouth, he here put out his tongue
As e'en an ox would do that his nose sleeks.

Then lest I worry him, by a stay too long,
By whom of a brief stay I had been told,
I turned my back upon that sorrowing throng.
My Guide, I found, had taken a foothold
Already, on that ferocious monster's back
And he then said to me: "Be firm and bold.
Down on this ladder is our only track.
Climb toward the neck; halfway I hold my stance
And thus his tail all power to harm shall lack."
As he who feels the fit of ague advance
On him, so that his nails already are pale
And shivers if on shade he haps to glance,
Such I became hearing my Master's hail.
But with his taunts that shame grew in me apace
Which in front of good lord strengthens wassail.
Thus on those ugly shoulders I found place.
I tried to say, but not a sound went past
My trembling lips: "Hold me in thine embrace."
But as before he had helped me, when cast
In other dangers, soon as I was on
That mount, his arms 'round me, he held me fast.
Then said: "Thou canst now start, O Geryon.
With ample circles ease thy downward way:
Think of the novel load on thee now thrown."
As boat that leaves its mooring on the quay,
Backwards and backwards, thus he left the shore
And when he felt his length could have full play
He turned his tail where was his breast before
And holding it stretched out, moved like an eel
With his great paws gathering wind to soar.

I think that so much terror did not feel
Phaeton when from his hands the reins were flung—
And the burnt heavens still that flight reveal—
Nor hapless Icarus, his back unstrung
Of feathers, when the wax began to melt
And cried his father: "Watch, thy course is wrong!"
As held my heart when only on air I felt
Myself supported, while was ev'ry kind
Of view, but of that beast, wholly dispelt.
He slowly swam and ever more declined,
Wheeling around, though this I held in doubt
But that into my face blew an upward wind.
And now upon our right I heard the spout
Crashing below in such horrendous roars
That looking down, my head I stretchéd out.
Then more I feared the moment to unhorse
For I could see great fires and groanings hear,
So that I huddled, in myself retrorse.
I noticed, too—which first did not appear—
Our downward wheeling, for the many troops
Of tortured souls that from all sides drew near.
As falcon tires after long, aimless swoops
And then, though bird or lure is not in sight
Makes the falconer cry: "Alas, he droops"—
Slowly he comes down whence had been quick his flight
With many turns, and sets himself askew
Far from his teacher, as if full of spite—
Thus at the bottom Geryon dropped us two
Right at the foot of the ravine steep-shored,
And unburdened of us, upwards he flew
Vanishing fast, as dart leaving the cord.

Line 1—The three-bodied monster Geryon is borrowed from a Greek myth. Dante makes him a symbol of Fraud. Fraud and its perversion, Treason, are punished in the VIII and IX Circles, below the walls of the abyss.

16—Fine weaves were imported from Turkey and Tartary.

18—Aracne was changed by Minerva into a spider.

22—Beavers were common on the Danube.

58—The arms of the Gianfigliazzi, of Florence.

61—The arms of the Embriachi of Florence.

65—The Scrovigni, of Padua.

68—Possibly a Vitaliano de' Vitaliani, a neighbor of the Scrovigni.

72—Buiamonte, a knight from Florence. His arms were three yellow beaks on azure. Most famous usurer of all.

87—Shivers at the mere thought of cold, if looking at a shady place.

107—Phaeton, who tried to drive the sun's chariot.

109—Icarus, son of Daedalus, flew on wings made of feathers and wax. Tried to fly too high and the sun melted the wax.

117—Only the blowing of the up-wind warned Dante of his descent.

CANTO XVIII

ARGUMENT

At the bottom of the ravine where they are left by Geryon the Poets find themselves in the VIII Circle of Hell. This vast enceinte is subdivided in ten deep circular gulches in which the various kinds of Fraud are punished. This Canto deals with the Procurers and Seducers—in the first gulch—and with the Flatterers in the second one.

This place in Hell—'tis Malebolge called—
Is paved with stone of iron gray nuance
Such as the rock by which all 'round 'tis walled.

Right in the midst of that malign expanse
Yawns a great well—and deep it is and wide—
I shall say later of its ordinance.

Between the well and the steep rocky side
Is left a space which in a circle bends
And ten great gulches its bottom divide.

As one may see where, for the walls' defense,
Several moats around a fort are set,
Such 'round the well the gulches' course extends.

Similar built were those that here I met:
As in such forts out of each gate are seen
Small bridges spanning the moats' parapet,

Thus from the bottom of the steep ravine
O'er moats and ridges massive crags are thrown
Up to the well which breaks and takes them in.

Here, shaken from the back of Geryon,
We found ourselves; the Poet moved to go
Leftwards, and after him I too went on.

Upon my right struck me a novel woe:
New tortured souls whom a new scourging flays
In this first gulch I saw crowded below.

Therein the nakéd sinners, in the space
This side of center 'gainst us held their course;
Beyond, with us, but at a faster pace.

Thus o'er that bridge upon the Tiber shores—
The Pardon year—was the vast army sped
In manner by the Romans put in force:

That on one side, all keeping their forehead
Turned to the Castle, to Saint Peter's went,
And on the other, to the Hill instead.

And here and there, along the ghastly enceinte
Horned devils watched, all brandishing great whips
With which the sinners' back they cruelly rent.

Ah, how they made them lift their legs and hips
With the first slashes: surely none would be
Waiting the third, nor yet the second flips.

As I went on, in that foul company
My eyes met one, and I was prompt to say:
"The sight of him is not new food to me."

Therefore I stayed my step him to survey.
Stopping with me, consented my fond Guide
That for a while I follow a backward way.

The scourgéd sinner thought himself to hide
Lowering his face: no help from it he drew
For then I said: "O thou whose eyes are tied
Down to the earth, if is thy semblance true
Venedico Caccianimico art.
What brings thee here in these sharp Muds to rue?"
And he to me: "I speak with heavy heart
And moved by thy clear words which my mind bear
Back to the world where I too played a part.
I am the one by whom Ghisola fair
To do the Marquis' pleasure was inclined,
Howe'er may now be told that shameful snare.
Not alone from Bologna I at this grind;
We fill this place so that the tongues are fewer
Which expert to say "sipa" one could find
'Twixt Savena and the Reno—and if a sure
Token or mark of this thou wishest, bring
To mind how for our breast gain is the lure."
While thus he spake, with a skin-tearing sting
Lashed him a fiend who said: "Off, bawd, with thee;
No chance is here for women bartering."
Then I rejoined my escort rapidly.
Our way for a few steps forward we wend
Till a projecting bridge-like crag we see.
On that easily enough we then ascend
And o'er its ledge, upon our right, we go
Leaving those circles that will know no end.
When we arrived to where it yawns below
For a pass to the crowd under the thong:
"Stay, and on thee let strike"—my Leader so

Advised—" the vision of this other throng
Of wretches who have kept from thee their face
Because so far they went with us along."
From that old bridge we look upon the trace
Of those now coming on contrarywise
And whom the lashes similarly chase.
And my good Master seeming to surmise
My query said: "See that great shade advance:
He sheds no tear despite his agonies.
How yet he keeps his royal countenance!
Jason is, he, whose heart and wit showed when
He robbéd of their ram the Colchians.
Toward Lemnos' isle his sails he opened then
After the women bold and pitiless
Had put to sudden death all of their men.
There he with tokens and with wily address
Betrayed Hysipyle, maid young and fair
Who in betraying the rest had gained success.
But pregnant and alone he left her there.
For such a crime in such a pain he grieves:
And for Medea his meed also he must bear.
With him must walk who such betrayals weaves.
This is enough of the first gulch to scan
And of the kind its hungry maw receives."
We had come where the narrow passage ran
Across the second bank and made of it
A pier for shouldering another span.
And here we heard from the next circling pit
The whine of people who snort through their snout
And hard with their own palms their body hit.

A mouldy crust was spread the banks about
As vapors from below stick like a paste
On them and sight and smelling put to rout.
Looking on that dark gulch our eyes would waste
Unless we gain a place upon the verge
Of the rock, where the arch is loftiest.
Hither we come and see people emerge
Barely from the dim foss replete with murk
That human privies there seemed to converge.
As I seek those that on the bottom lurk
I note one's head which is so smeared with rot
That he shows not either as lay or clerk.
He shouted: "Why amidst this filthy lot
Keepst thou on me alone thy greedy eye?"
"Because, if memory now fails me not,
I think I have seen thee with thy hair dry,
Alessio Interminei from Lucca"— I said.
"Hence thee I mark, more than thy company."
Then, as he struck a blow upon his head:
"Flatteries have sunk me down in this drain,
As ne'er with them my tongue was surfeited."
Afterwards said my Leader: "See thou train
Thy sight a distance farther from this crag
So that thine eyes may well the face attain
Of that most filthy and disheveled hag
Scratching herself with dirty nails: she stands
A while, then on her thighs she seems to sag.
Thaïs she is, most foul of courtesans
Who questioned by her lover:—Thank'st me thou?—
Answered:—Indeed, and with exhuberance.—
And with such sights let us be sated now."

Line 1—Malebolge: literally, Evil Gulches.

5—At the bottom of that well is Circle IX, of the Traitors.

25—The Procurers are moving counter to the Poets; the Seducers in the same direction.

28, etc.—The Jubilee year, 1300. Those going towards Saint Peter were naturally facing Castle Sant'Angelo; the returning stream faced the Janiculum Hill.

50—A prominent citizen of Bologna.

51—The text is variously interpreted. May refer to a certain favorite resort not far from Bologna where mud bath treatments were given.

55—Venedico induced Ghisola, his own sister, to give herself to the Marquis of Este.

60—"Sipa" is "yes" in the Bologna dialect. Savena and Reno are two small streams near that city.

76—The Seducers.

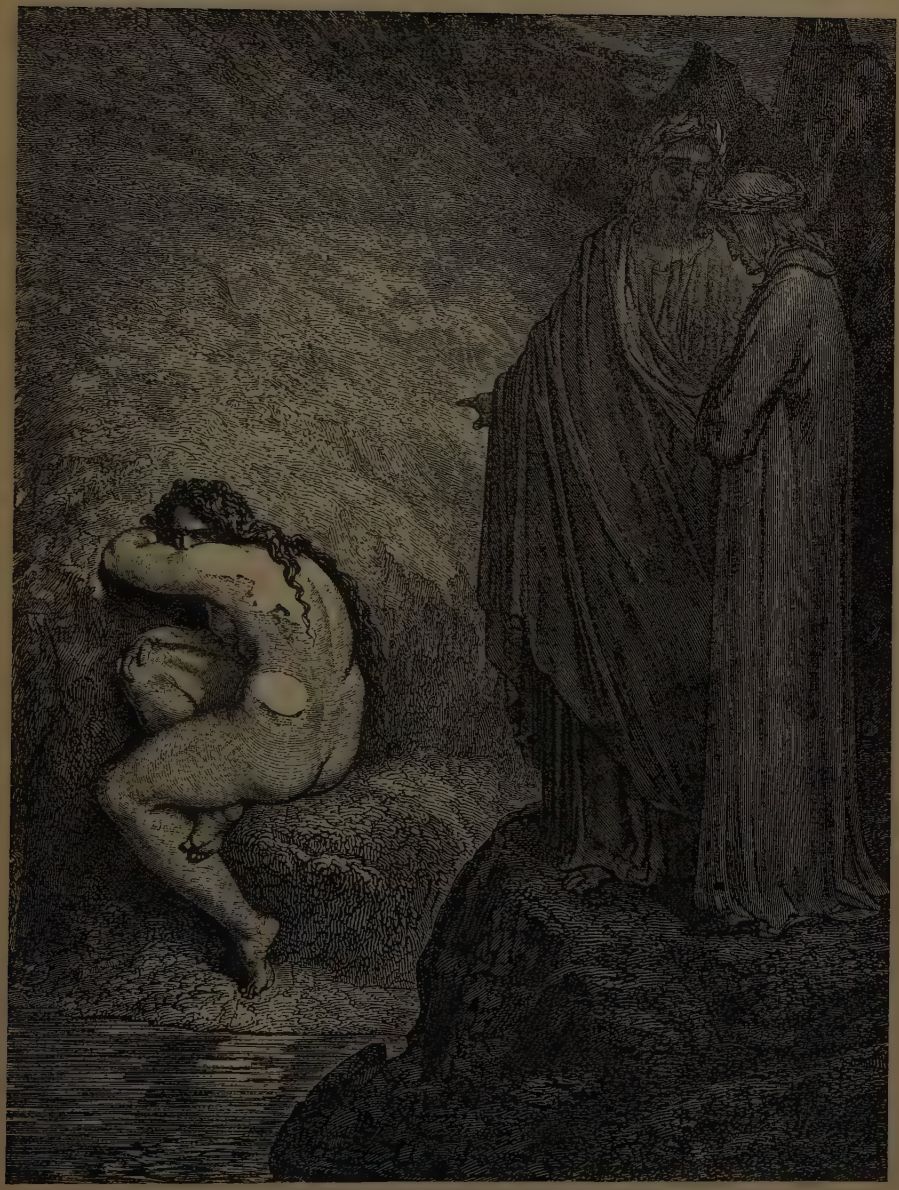
83, etc.—Jason, leader of the Argonauts, who took the Golden Fleece from the Colchians.

88, etc—The women of Lemnos betrayed by their men, carried out a pact to kill all of them. Hypsipyle, however, succeeded in saving her father.

96—Medea, daughter of the King of the Colchians, another of Jason's victims.

112—The Flatterers.

133—Thais, the courtesan of Athens, famous in a play of the Roman Terentius. Her words are reported by a go-between who had brought her some presents, to her lover Thraso, in a scene of the play: The Eunuch.



CANTO XVIII-133

CANTO XIX

ARGUMENT

This Canto describes the third gulch of the VIII Circle which contains the sinners guilty of Simony. Dante meets here several Popes whom he charges with that sin and against whom he pours his bitter Ghibellin scorn, while declaring at the same time his devotion to the spiritual authority symbolized by the Keys of Peter.

O Simon Magus and thy wretchéd breed,
Ye who the holy things — to holy use
Only to be espoused—through grasping greed
For gold and silver wantonly traduce,
Of you must at this time my trumpet ring
As in this third of gulches your kind rues.
We have now reached the charnel following,
And to the rocky ridge, right on that part
That overhangs the middle fosse we cling.
O Thou All-Wise, how well display thy art
The earth, the heavens, and the world of woe!
How well thy justice doth its method chart!
The livid stone that paved the bed below
Was pierced with holes—and both the flanks likewise—
Round and of equal spread, in many a row.

No lesser and no greater was their size
Than those that in my beautiful Saint John
Are made for use of them who there baptize.
One of those wells—not many years have run
Since then—I broke for one about to drown:
And let this be truth's seal for everyone.
Out of each hole I saw—above its crown—
A sinner's feet and legs, but only as high
As the thick part; the rest was further down.
Of everyone both soles were fiery
And for the pain their junctures squirmed so
They would have snapped a rope of many a ply.
As gliding flames along the surface go
On things enveloped by some oily drip,
In the same manner there, from heel to toe.
"Master, who is he whose legs much harder flip"—
Said I—"than all who the same torment share
And whom the flames suck with a ruddier lip?"
"If thou so wishest, I shall take thee there"—
Said he—"Along yonder less steep incline.
His name and crimes he shall himself declare."
Then I: "What is thy pleasure also is mine.
That from thy will I do not stray, my Lord,
Thou knowest, and things unsaid thou canst divine."
We reached the outer bank by which is shored
This gulch, and to the left my Master strode
Down to the bottom, narrow and thickly bored.
Nor did he from his flank release the load
He carried of my body, until the break
Of him who by his legs his torment showed.

"Whoe'er thou art, here stuck in as a stake,
Wretchéd soul that holdst up thy nether ends,
Canst thou give word to me?"—to him I spake.
I stood as when a friar in shriving bends
By the earth-hole to hear a murderer
Who calls again for him and death thus fends.
He cried: "Art thou already standing there,
Already standing there, O Boniface?
Quite a few years astray the cards then were.
So soon sated art thou with the high place
And wealth for which thou didst contrive to seize
The Beauteous Lady and her so foully abase?"
Such I became as those who ill at ease,
Failing to understand others' reply,
Fear mockery's sting and thus from speaking cease.
Then Virgil: "Quickly speak: It is not I,
Not I the one for whom thou seemst to yearn."
My answer did his counsel satisfy.
The spirit gave his feet a harder churn
And with a voice that tears and sobbings tore
Said then to me: "What wishest thou to learn?
If thirst of knowing who I was of yore
Made thee this treacherous embankment tread,
Know then that I the mighty mantle wore.
Indeed by the she-bear I was well bred,
So greedy I was that to advance her spawn,
Wealth there, and here myself I pocketed.
Beneath my head the others down are drawn
Who have preceded me through simony
And flattened lie along this rocky yawn.

I too shall further drop as soon as he
Shall here arrive whom thou hast heard me greet
When first I questioned thee too hastily.
But longer time already has this heat
Roasted my feet and I have stood so upset
Then he shall here be planted with red feet.
For after him, of deeds more noisome yet,
A lawless shepherd shall come from the west
Who must o'er both us herein be let.
New Jason he, whom Maccabees attest
To have been favored by his king of old;
Thus the French King shall take him to his breast."
I wonder whether here I was too bold
But my reply was in this strain: "Pray thee,
Do tell me now what was the sum of gold
Our Lord asked from Saint Peter as a fee
Before He gave the keys into his trust?
Indeed naught else he asked but "Follow me."
Nor Peter nor the others took the cost
In gold or silver when Matthias' sort
Gave him the place the guilty soul had lost.
Stay here then; justly indeed thy sins now hurt;
And keep good watch on all that money ill-gained
That once made thee so bold 'gainst Charles' court.
And were it not that even now restrained
I am by veneration for the keys
Which were by thee in the sweet life detained,
I would speak forth much harder words than these.
Seeing the good beneath, the bad above,
The world is saddened by your avarice.

Shepherds as you the Evangelist thought of
When he saw her, o'er many waves the proud
Queen, lusting with the kings in filthy love.
The one at birth with seven heads endowed
Who by ten horns showed her nobility
While yet her husband was to virtue vowed.
Silver and gold ye made your Deity;
How differ ye from idol-worshippers
Save that one they, a hundred worship ye?
Ah, Constantine, of what great ills the heirs
Made us, not thy conversion but that grant
Which first a Father bound to worldly cares!"
And while I did to him such numbers chant
Whether by conscience or by rage distressed
Harder than ever he twisted either plant.
That I had pleased my Lord was manifest
As he moved not his lips but seemed intent
To hear those words of mine, with truth impressed.
And then with both his arms around me bent
Lifting my body up to his breast, he made
Again for the hard path of his descent.
Nor was he by my burden overweighed,
But of that arch the top he reached with me
On which the pass o'er the fourth gulch is laid.
Here only he set his cherished burden free,
Gently on that crag so scabrous and so steep
That even goats could not climb easily.
Hence of another gulch I saw the deep.

Line 1—Simon Magus, who proposed to buy the graces of the Holy Ghost from Saint Peter, has given the name to the traffic in holy things.

16—In the church of St. John the Baptist all Florentines are baptized. A child playing in the church once fell into one of the wells where baptismal water was kept while Dante was present, and the Poet broke the well to save the child who was wedged into it. His action had been, apparently, misrepresented.

49—Death penalty for murderes was sometimes carried out by letting down the head of the criminal in a hole which was then gradually filled with sand.

53—The speaker is Nicholas III, of the Roman family of the Orsini. Pope from 1277 to 1280. He thinks that his successor, Boniface VIII, has already arrived.

58—The Roman See.

70—The she-bear is on the Orsini shield. Dante charges Nicholas III with having given places of importance to his own relatives.

83—Clement V, a Frenchman, elected through the influence of Philip the Fair, King of France. He transferred the papal seat from Rome to Avignon.

85—This Jason is the High Priest mentioned in the Book of Maccabees, who introduced Greek customs among the Jews and was favored by King Antiochus Epiphanes.

95—At the election of a successor to Judas.

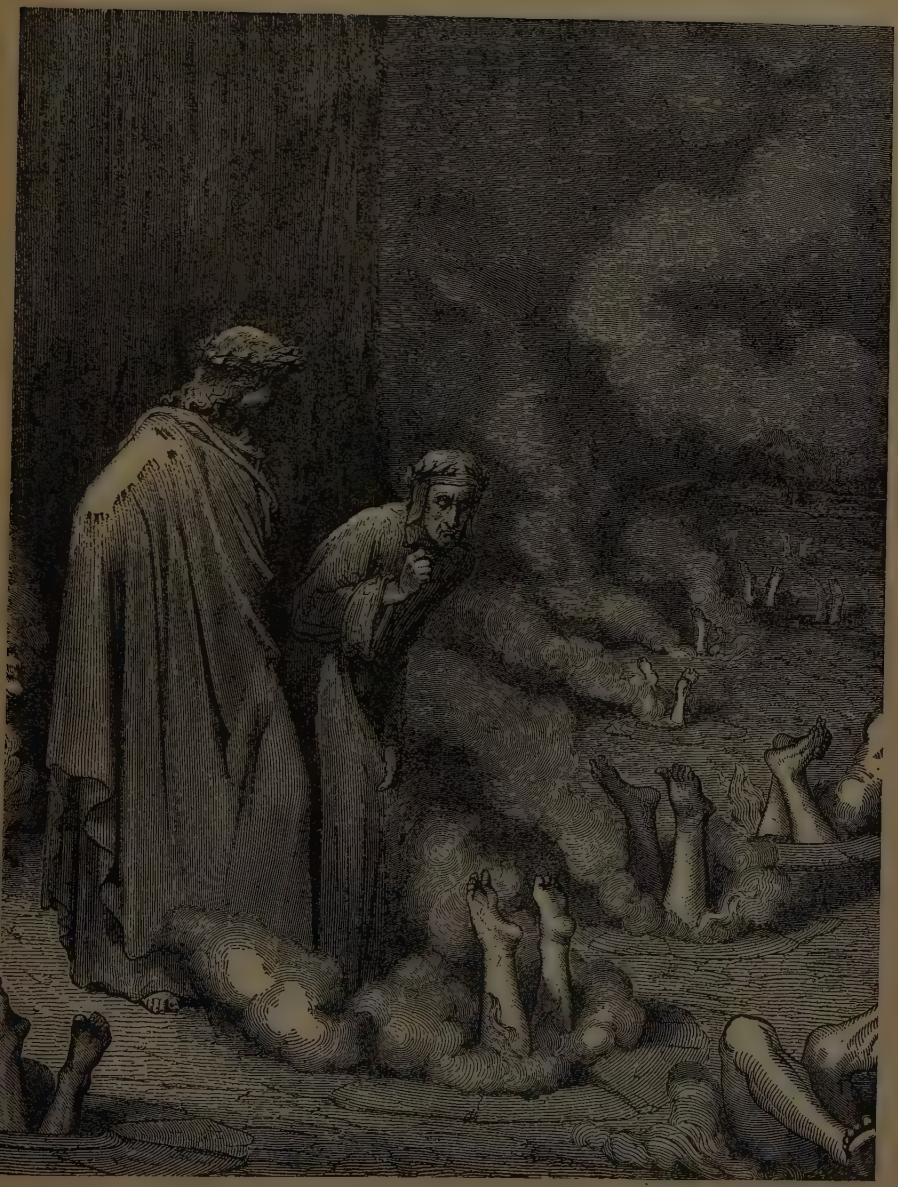
99—Nicholas III tried to marry a niece of his to a nephew of Charles of Anjou.

106, etc.—See Rev. XVXII. "I shall show you... the great whore... with whom the Kings of the earth have committed fornication..."

Freely interpreting, Dante takes this as a figure of Papal Rome, endowed with the seven Sacraments and strengthened by the ten Commandments (line 110) while the Pope (her husband) was still virtuous, that is, for Ghibellin Dante, still without temporal possessions.

115—Constantine the Great was supposed to have made to the Popes a grant of Rome and adjacent territory.

133—Of the fourth gulch.



CANTO XIX-49

CANTO XX

ARGUMENT

In the fourth gulch of the VIII Circle are found the Soothsayers, their head turned around over their shoulders. The sight of Manto among them gives occasion to Virgil to relate the origin of his city, Mantua.

I now must fill my verse with a new woe
Giving thus matter to the twentieth strain
Of the first part, that sings those sunk below.
I was already all settled to obtain
A clear survey of the uncovered deep
Bathed by the tears of excruciating pain.
In that round moat I saw silently creep
A weeping crowd that moved at that slow pace
Such as our litanies are wont to keep.
As further down on them I drew my gaze
Each one most strangely twisted I descried
From chin to where the neck sets on its base.
Their face was turned upon the shoulders' side
And they were forced to stride on backwardly,
As seeing forward was to them denied.

Perhaps there have been men so wholly awry
Turned by the force of palsy but I ne'er
Have seen nor think there be such misery.
So may, reader, for thee this reading bear
Some fruits, God willing, think thou in thy mind
If I could keep my sight undimméd there;
Seeing the figure of our common kind
So dislocated that the eyes would let
Their tears descend across the parts behind.
'Gainst one of the hard crags my body set,
Certes I wept, so that my Escort said:
"Art thou like other witless people yet?
Pity lives here when it is wholly dead.
What fouler sinner breathes than any man
Who grieves for those by Judgment visited?
Lift up, lift up thy head and see the one
For whom Earth opened in the Thebans' sight
So that all shouted:—Whither rushest on
Amphiaraus? Why leavest thou the fight?—
Nor from his downward ruin did he rest
Till Minos, from whose grasp there is no flight.
See how he has his shoulders for his breast;
Backward he looks and backward is his gait
Because foreknowledge was his eager quest.
And see Tiresias, who was transmutate
When from a man he turned into a female,
Thus of his body changing ev'ry trait.
And first the twisted snakes he had to flail
With his own rod, beforé on him would grow
Again the plumage proper of a male.

With back against his belly, in the next row
Is Aruns who in the hills of Luni, hewed
By those that in Carrara live below,

Amidst the marbles white dwelt in a rude
Cavern so that upon the starry pall
And o'er the sea his sight was free to brood.

And she beyond, whose loosened tresses fall
Over her breast—invisible to thee—
And on that side her hairy skin is all,

Was Manto who had roved o'er land and sea
And in my native place then paused to stay;;
Whereof I wish thou list a while to me.

After her father came to his last day
And Bacchus' town 'neath tyrants' heels was ground
Long o'er the world she made her wand'ring way.

Up north in Italy's fair land is found
A lake, Benaco called, beneath that chain
Of Alps which Germany, past Tyrol, bound.

A thousand o'er, methinks, the springs that drain
—Twixt Canonica and Garda—the Pennine
Alp, and the quiet of that lake attain.

A place is there, halfway, where the Trentine
Shepherd, that of Verona and he, beside,
Of Brescia, if passing by, could make their sign.

Sits fair and strong Peschiera fortified
To face onslaughts from Brescia or Bergamo,
Where lower shores let further in the tide.

Thereto the surplus waters all must flow
That in Benaco's breast cannot be held
And thence through the green field to a river grow.

Soon as this is by a faster head impelled
Benaco's name changes to Mincio instead
Down to Governo where Po and Mincio weld.

Not long it runs when wider grows its bed
And on a swampy plain its course is stayed,
Where oft in summer are foul poisons bred.

In passing thereabout the cruel maid
Saw arid land amidst the marshy vale
Devoid of men and tilléd not by spade.

To keep herself beyond the human pale
There stopping with her serfs, her arts she plied
And there she lived and left her mortal veil.

The men who dwelt around the countryside
Flew there as to a stronghold, for to all foes
The wide surrounding marsh a path denied.

On those dead bones in time a city arose,
And it was called—no omen being read—
Mantua, after her who first there chose.

It was indeed closer inhabited
Ere Casalodi's madness by the snare
Of Pinamonte to such grief was led.

Of this I make thee wise, that shouldst thou e'er
Hear of my city's birth in other ways
No falsehood may for thee the truth impair."

And I: "Master, thy speech to me conveys
Such certainty and enkindles so my mind
That others were to me as burnt out braise.

But tell me more of this transposéd kind,
If any worth of note beneath us go;
For only they my thoughts and wishes bind."

Then said he: "Mark the one with the long flow
Of beard from cheeks to shoulders: when bereft
Of all her males was ancient Hellas, so
That hardly enough were for her cradles left,
He was an augur and with Calchas set
The moment the first cable should be cleft.
Eurypylus his name, as it is met
Also in my lofty tragedy somewhere:
Knowing it all, thou must know well of that.
The next, about the flanks looking so spare,
Michael of Scotland was, and verily
Of all the magic frauds he was aware.
Guido Bonatti see, Asdente see
Who now is wishing he had nothing learned
Past thread and leather, but too late is he.
See, too, those wretches who the needle spurned,
Shuttle and spindle, for the magic lore:
Worked charms by figures and weird herbs they burned.
But come, for where, past the Sevillian shore,
Both hemispheres their boundaries enlace,
Cain with his thorns touches the ocean floor.
And yesternight the moon had rounded face;
Thou must recall that she did not impede
Thy seeking through the forest deep a trace."
While thus he spoke onward we did proceed.

Line 8—Religious processions singing the Litanies.

31, etc.—Amphiaraus, one of the Seven Kings who besieged Thebes. Was swallowed by the earth in sight of the Thebans. Had tried to avoid his doom by concealing himself. Known as a soothsayer.

40—Tiresias, a Greek soothsayer. A legend tells that on meeting two twisted snakes in a wood he struck them with his rod and was changed into a female. Years afterwards he met the same snakes and striking them again, he was changed back into a man.

47—Etruscan soothsayer. Lived in the mountains above Carrara. Luni was an ancient Etruscan town.

55—Manto, sorceress from Thebes, city sacred to Bacchus.

65—Between the Canonica valley and Lake Garda.

67—Coming south along Benaco Lake there is a place where three Dioceses meet: there the three Bishops (Shepherds) could all give their blessing.

92—The founders had no recourse to the usual omens to find an acceptable name.

95—Count Pinamonte, by a ruse, slaughtered Count Casalodi, seigneur of Mantua, together with many other nobles of that city.

106—Eurypylus, and augur at the time when almost all Greek manhood left for the siege of Troy. He is mentioned in the Aeneid, here called a Tragedy because written in a nobler language than Dante's own Comedy.

116—A magician famous about the beginning of the XIII century.

118—Guido Bonatti, astrologer from Florence. Asdente, a shoemaker from Parma who became astrologer.

121—Women who turned to witchcraft.

124—The Moon (Cain with his thorns) sets in the West, beyond Spain.

127—The moon was full; it had not impeded but helped Dante. When the moon is full it sets near sunrise. A new day was then breaking upon the world.

CANTO XXI

ARGUMENT

In the fifth gulch (of the VIII Circle) are the Barrators or the Fraudulent in public office; modernly we would call them grafters. They are immersed in boiling pitch and watched over by demons who prevent their showing above the surface. The grotesque scenes of this and the following canto are about the only show of humor—and that of a grim kind—found in the Poem.

From bridge to bridge we thus moved on, and were
Our words on things my Comedy heeds not.
And when we reached to the next summit, there
We stood to view that other fissure wrought
In Malebolge and its vain miseries:
And that I saw with wondrous darkness fraught.
As in the Venice Arsenal one sees,
In winter, pitch that boils like viscous brew
To caulk their ships that now are moored at ease,
As unseaworthy—and meanwhile a crew
Builds a new ship; with fillings others stay
The leaks of boats that many a tempest knew—
Others at prow or poop hammer away,
Some twist new cords and some plane out new oars,
And some, on main or mizzen, patches lay;

Thus by God's arts, not by the fire's own force,
Seethéd down there a pitch half liquefied
That spread its clammy hold o'er all the shores.
That I could see, but nothing else descried
Save for the bubbles that the boiling raised—
And saw its surface swell, then shrunk subside.
While down below I thus intently gazed,
Shouted my Guide: "Look out!"—and drew me near
To him from the far edge where I was placed.
I turned then quickly, looking at my rear
As man who craves to see what he should fly,
The while he is unmanned by sudden fear,
Yet for his looking does not linger by.
And at my back I saw a devil black
Who ran upon the rock most rapidly.
How fierce his aspect was, and how—alack!—
A ruthless cruelty by his act he showed
While his wide opened wings made light his track.
Astride his pointed and proud shoulders rode
A sinner seated on his haunches' spread
And by the feet the demon clutched his load.
"O Malebranche"—from our bridge he said—
"An elder of Saint Zita is coming o'er;
Put him below, I must my way retread
Back to that city where there is plenty more.
Barrators, save Bonturo, everyone.
There "Yes" and "No" are changed as one pays for."
He threw him o'er, and on the rocky span
Turn'd 'round so quick that with such hurry ne'er
A loosened mastiff after robbers ran.

The sinner sank, then, doubled, came for air,
But from their shelter 'neath the bridge up spoke
The fiends: "The Holy Face is here nowhere.
Not as in Serchio must be here thy stroke.
Dare not therefore to show above this brook
Unless thou like to feel how sharp we poke."
Quickly they grabbed him then with many a hook
And said: "All must be covered at this hop.
Thieve, if thou canst, but where no one can look."
Thus with their prongs do kitchen scullions stop
Meat chunks that in a caldron upward rise
And press them so they will not come a-top.
Then my good Master: "Lest they cast their eyes
Upon thee here"—he said—"hadst better crawl
Behind a ledge that might as screen suffice.
Nor for whate'er attack may haply fall
On me, fear thou: these things I know of old
As I have been already at such a brawl."
Then as beyond the bridge's head he strolled
And on the sixth embankment set his foot
Certainly he needed to be firm and bold.
With such a storm of rage as runs a mute
Of dogs to chase a mendicant away—
Who where he sudden stops cries out his suit—
Thus from under the bridge now rushéd they
Pointing their hooks at him, ready to stab;
But he warned them: "None of your fiendish play.
Ere with your hooks you dare my flesh to grab
Let one of you step forth and hear me through.
Then he shall see if he still wants to jab."

"Let Malacoda go"—cried the whole crew.
And while the others paused, one fiend drew nigh,
Saying: "What good to him this parley will do?"
"Think'st, Malacoda, thou seest me to thy
Domain arrived"—thus did my Guide retort—
"Quite safe from any check that you may try,
But with God's help and fate to my support?
Let me proceed, for Heaven's will hath shown
I must another through these crags escort."
So by such words his pride was overthrown
That he let fall his fork down at his feet
And warned the rest: "Let him be harmed by none."
Then spoke my Guide: "O thou who holdst thy seat
Amidst those rocks, afraid of being tracked,
Come; by my side thou shalt no danger meet."
My haste toward him by nothing could be slacked
But all the demons quickly forward drew
So that I feared that they would break the pact.
Thus from Caprona I saw trembling issue
The soldiers, as the covenant did provide,
Amidst so many foes loath to go through.
With all my body pressed against my Guide
I stood in wait, nor did my eyes e'er flit
From those ill brows that good resolve belied.
They lowered their hooks: "Shall I touch him a bit
Upon the back?"—would they among them say.
And others: "Aye, get him fast on thy spit."
But he whom had my Master held at bay
Speaking to him, quickly turned 'round to fend
The attack and said: "Stay, Scarmiglione, stay."

And then to us: "Your path cannot extend
Further upon this rock: a ruinous break
Has torn that span, the sixth, at th'other end.
But if you wish yet further to betake
Yourself, proceed upon this bank, and o'er
Yonder next bridge, close by, your passage make.
Yester, when had the day but five hours more—
Twelve hundred years and sixty-five ago—
That span was broken off at its far shore.
I now send some of mine further below
To watch if any should come up for air;
Go ye with them; no enmity will they show.
Calcabrina, Alichino, move up there,
And thou, Cagnazzo"—he shouted to his crew—
"The ten of you in Barbariccia's care.
Go, Libicocco and Draghignazzo: with you
Tusked Ciriatto and Graffiacane: then
Mad Rubicante and Farfarello, too.
Keep a sharp eye on all the boiling fen.
Let these to the next rock go harmlessly;
The one that, whole, bespans the sinners' pen."
"Ah me!"—said I—"my Lord, what do I see?
Without a guard let us pursue our road;
If thou darest go, I ask no more for me.
If so alert thou art as thou hast showed
So far, seest thou not now how hard they grate
Their teeth, and how for us their frowns ill bode?"
And he to me: "Let all thy fears abate,
And let them gnash, if so they would as lief:
Thus for the boiling ones they show their hate."

They turned to go on the left shoring reef,
But first each showed his tongue, in act of scorn,
Between his teeth, as signal to their chief;
And he had made of his behind a horn.

Line 7—The Arsenal, or Shipyard of Venice, had evidently been visited by the Poet.

37—Malebranche is the general name of the devils in this gulch; it means "Evil talons". Saint Zita was patroness of the city of Lucca then governed by a body of ten Elders.

41—Bonturo Dati: he was, of course, the worst grafter of all.

48—An object of great devotion in Lucca is a picture of the "Holy Face" of Christ. The sinner comes up in a sort of kneeling position, hence the jibe.

49—A river near Lucca: a favorite bathing place.

53—The black pitch was the regulation mask.

76—Malacoda or "Ill Tail".

94—Caprona, a castle near Pisa, had been taken and garrisoned by soldiers from Lucca. Guido of Montefeltro, in the employ of the Pisans won back the castle and agreed to let the garrison go unharmed.

105—Scarmiglione and other names mentioned below are fantastic names having little meaning.

112—According to Dant'es calendar, that would have been the hour of Christ's death.

CANTO XXII

ARGUMENT

The Poets proceed along the left bank of the fifth gulch of the VIII Circle, accompanied by the ten demons. They meet some more of the Barrators: those who betrayed their master and were unfaithful in a private charge.

I have seen horsemen when their camp they break
Ready for muster or for storming band,
Or falling in retreat their 'scape to make;
Foragers, Aretines, throughout your land
Oft I have seen, and men off on a raid
And knights in tourney or joust taking their stand;
At times with bells, with trumpets, or with aid
Of drums, of signs from castle ramparts, or
With things of our own work or foreign made,
But with such strange a signal ne'er before
Horsemen or footmen started I had seen,
Or ships that sail by sign of star or shore.
The ten black demons moved with us: a mean
Company indeed, but this I well have learned:
"In church with saints, with gluttons at the inn."

Still to the pitch was my attention turned
Watching for ev'ry movement of the black
Basin, and of the people that it burned.
As dolphins by the arching of their back
Give sign to sailors that to save the boat
They must use all their art to make safe tack,
Some sinners there thus let their shoulders float
Whereof their anguish did perhaps subside,
And lightning-fast they dove back in the moat.
As at the water edge by the brookside
One sees the frogs while but their snouts protrude
And underneath their feet and bulk they hide,
Thus all around yet other sinners stood
And for the seething pitch they left the brink
When Barbariccia coming forth they view'd.
I saw—and horror-struck of that I think—
A sinner waiting thus, as one may see
A frog that lingers while the others sink.
And Graffiacane, of that foul company
The nearest, grappled quick his clotted hair:
An otter, thus drawn up, he seemed to me.
I was of all their names already aware
As I had marked when answered each his call
And to their hailings I had harked with care.
"O Rubicante, it is thy chance to fall
On him with thy good claws and skin him through"—
Thus shouted with one voice the demons all.
And I: "My Master, if thou can'st so do,
Find who that wretch may be who has thus run
Foul of the wrath of that revengeful crew."

VII At that, my Guide close to his side moved on
And of his country asked him: thus answered he:
"Of the Navarra soil I am a son.

XIII My mother put on me a lord's livery:
She had me of a wastrel who, all know,
Destroyed himself, after his property.

XVI Then I was servant to good King Thibault,
And for the barratries I practiced there
I pay the reckoning by scorching so."

55 And Ciriatto whose mouth corners were
Set with long tushes such as boars display
Made the wretch feel how one of them could tear.

58 To wild she-cats the mouse had fallen prey.
But Barbariccia embraced him fast and said:
"While I am hugging him, keep ye away."

XXI Then toward my Master turning 'round his head:
"What else thou wishest, now of him demand
Before these others tear him shred by shred."

64 To him my Guide: "Amidst that sinful band
Under the pitch, know'st any Latin shade?"
"I have but left"—he answered—"close at hand

XXII Someone who from those parts not far abade.
Ah, if I were, as he, still covered o'er
I would not be of hooks and claws afraid."

XXII And Libicocco: "Enough with him we bore."
And in the sinner's arm he sank his hook
So that, by pulling, off a joint he tore.

XXI And Draghignazzo could not wait, but took
Hold of his legs. Then he who led the array
Turned all around on them with an ill look.

When somewhat pacified they kept away,
To him who on his wound kept fixed his eyes
My Master put a query without delay:
"Who was the one that thou, with ill advice,
Hast left, to show above the brink thy face?"
"There"—was his answer—"Friar Gomita lies.
He of Gallura, a fraud-becramméd vase,
Who guarding men who 'gainst his Liege had fought
Did so that he deserved their hearty praise.
He admits he let them go and got his scot.
Working in other charges this same trick
Not a small thief, but king was he of the lot.
Don Michael Zanche of Logodoro is thick
With him; Sardinia should in them take pride:
To speak of her their tongues are ever quick.
Ah, me! How growls that other at my side!
Had I no fear, I would of others tell
But he seems ready now to scratch my hide".
And their great Marshal turned to Farfarel
Who rolled his eyes as if about to strike
And said: "Move back, thou bird most horrible."
"If someone else to hear or see you like,
Tuscan or Lombard"—quivering with fear
That wretch went on—"I'll call them to the dike.
Let those ill claws move somewhat to the rear
So that my friends may not their vengeance dread
An then I will, keeping my seat right here,
Make seven more come in my single stead,
Whistling the usual signal when a scout
Among us raises o'er the pitch his head."

Then Ciriatto lifted up his snout
And shook his head: "Hear! A fine scheme, for sure,
To throw himself below, he has laid out."
But he, well stocked with many a trap and lure,
Answered: "Too fine a schemer would I be
When I more sorrow to my kind procure."
Alichin was not proof against this plea;
Forestalled the rest and said: "Shouldst thou dive off
I shall not only gallop after thee
But with my wings I shall beat o'er the trough.
Let's leave the ridge and let the bank be a screen;
Let's see if thou alone canst us all scoff."
The Navarrese then watched well for his chance;
Planted his feet upon the ground and shot
Downward, and fooled their purpose all at once.
Therefrom on all of them remorse was brought
But more on him who had provoked that plight;
Quickly he sprang up exclaiming: "Thou art caught!"
But to no avail, because against that fright
E'en wings were lagging: thus beneath one went,
The other raised his breast in upward flight.
Thus suddenly a duck that the descent
Spies of a falcon, dives and draws away
And he comes up again, wrathful and spent.
Calcabrina, though wroth at that foul play
Was pleased at that escape and quickly flew
After the other, eager for a fray.
And as the barrator was lost to view,
Upon his mate with his keen claws he fell
And closely grappled him, above the slough.

But fighting hawk that other was as well
And quick at grappling him, so that the pair
Together dropped midway the boiling swell.

The heat indeed was a fast raveler,
But to come up, their nerves they vainly stressed
For in the pitch their wings entangled were.

Then Barbariccia, smarting like the rest,
Sent four to fly upon the other coast
With all their forks: obeying him with zest

From either side they went down to their post
And thrust their weapons toward the two ensnared
Who were already baked beneath the crust.

Thus tangled we left them and onward fared.

Line 4—Dante himself had taken parts in various raids on the territory of Arezzo while that city had been at war with Florence.

19—Popular belief had it that dolphins warned sailors of impending storms.

49—This is a certain Ciampolo of whom little is known. After the death of his father, who had committed suicide when reduced to poverty, his mother placed him at the court of a baron of Navarra.

52—King of Navarra.

65—Latin, that is Italian.

81—Friar Gomita had some responsible position in the province of Gallura (Sardinia). For a price, he let some enemies of his master escape while they were imprisoned in his charge. He claimed that they had fled in spite of his precautions: the fraud was discovered and Gomita hanged.

88—Governed the province of Logodoro (Sardinia) for Enzo, natural son of Frederick II, while the latter was kept prisoner in Bologna. Was guilty of many malfeasances: murdered by Branca Doria, his son-in-law. See Inf. XXXIII, 137.

127—Ciampolo's fright was such that it made him speedy beyond the power of wings.

CANTO XXIII

ARGUMENT

The Poets are pursued by the enraged demons but by sliding down the bank to the sixth gulch they make their escape. Here (sixth division of the VII circle) they meet the Hypocrites. From one of them they learn how to make their way to the seventh gulch.

Silent, alone and escortless we went,
The one in front, the other one behind,
As Minor Friars upon a journey bent.
On Aesop's fable was intent my mind,
Where to the mouse the frog its shoulders lends,
Being the present broil of equal kind.
"Now" and "This moment" match no more their sense
Than those two stories, if a man looks close
Comparing their beginnings and their ends.
And as one thought bursts from another, rose
New thought upon the one I first had weaved
And with a double fear my fancy froze.
Thus then I pondered: they have been deceived
On our account and so much scorn they bear
And injury, that they must feel quite grieved.

To inborn ill-will add of this wrath the flare
And after us those fiends will surely steal
More cruel than a dog that claws a hare.
All my hair standing up I then could feel,
Such was my fright, and while behind I peer
I thus address my Guide: "Thou must conceal
Both of us quickly, for I sorely fear
Those Malebranche; out of their morass
They come: their steps, in fancy, already I hear.
And he: "Thine outward form, if leaded glass
Were I, no quicker would in me refract
Than to thine inner one my eyes can pass.
Alike in semblance as well as in act
Thy thoughts just now have met my own, and I
The same advice from both am forced to extract.
If this right bank should happen so to lie
That down to the next gulch it gives a stair
From this imagined chase we then can fly."
Hardly he had time his counsel to declare,
I saw them coming with their wings spread wide
To capture us, and not so far they were.
Suddenly into his grasp took me my Guide
As mother whom some noise awakes distraught
And sees the flames a-leaping to her side:
She grabs her child and runs and lingers not
Having him only and not herself in mind
So that to her scant dress she gives no thought;
Thus he, his back on the hard stone reclined,
Hurriedly slid a-down that sloping shore
By which one side of the next gulch is lined.

Never did waters through some conduit pour
Eager the wheels of a land mill to feed—
When to the paddles close to going o'er—
As on that border made my Master speed
And carried me held tight against his breast
Not as a friend, but as a son indeed.
Hardly on the bed below had come to rest
His feet, when they appeared atop the incline
Above us, but my Guide no fear expressed.
For that high Providence by whose design
They are set guardians of the fifth enceinte
Denies them power to trespass that confine.
And now we found a painted crowd that went
Around the gulch at quite a tardy pace,
Weeping, and tired in semblance and forspent.
They wore a cape with hood down on their face
Over their eyes, and in such fashion dight
As those that in Cologne the monks encase.
Their outward gilt would dazzle any sight;
Within, they were all lead and heavy so
That Frederick's capes like straw would have been light.
O mantle wearisome of timeless woe!
Intent on their sad plaint, on our left flank
Together with those shades we turned to go;
But for their burden moved each weary rank
So slow that a new company we found
Abreast, with ev'ry motion of our shank.
Then to my Master: "Anyone renowned
For deeds or words see'st thou upon this track?"—
I said—"Move, as we go, thine eyes around."

Hearing the Tuscan speech, one at our back
Shouted to us: "Pray, slack a while your speed
Ye who so hasten through this welkin black.
Perhaps thy wish will get from me its meed."
Thereon my Master turned and said: "Here stay,
And then according to their pace proceed."
Halting, I saw the eyes of two display
How with their souls to be with me they yearned
But their load hindered and the narrow way.
When alongside, with slanted eyes that burned
With wonder, they looked on—holding their tongue;
And then to speak between themselves they turned:
"The one who moves his tongue seems to belong
Yet to the living: if dead either is
Why not on them this heavy stole is hung?"
Then to me: "Tuscan, who hast come to this
College of Hypocrites in sadness bent,
Tell us thy name and think it not amiss."
I answered: "I was born and I have spent
My youth in that great city on Arno's shores
And from my flesh has not my soul been rent.
But who are you whose heavy sorrow pours,
As I can see, so abundant down the cheek,
And what great torment all that glitter stores?"
One said: "These orange capes from which we peek
Are laden, and so thick that like great weights
Their balances beneath they cause to creak.
We both were born within Bologna's gates;
Both Jovial Friars: I Catalano and he
Was Loderingo, whom thy city as mates

In power selected, while by use would be
One called to guard her peace. Our deeds of yore
E'en now 'round your Gardingo all can see."
I then began: "O friars, your ills. . . ."—no more
I said for then a shape lept to my eyes
Held by three stakes cross-like upon the floor.
On seeing me, all writhing 'gainst his ties
With harrowing sighs he blew his beard awry,
And Catalano, who noticed my surprise,
Said to me: "There transfixed thou seest him lie
Whose counsel on the Pharisees bestowed
Was that one man should for the people die.
Transverse is he and nakéd on the road,
As thou well seest. And to give him his dues,
All passing make him feel their heavy load.
Thus his father-in-law the same abuse
Bears in this fosse, and all of that conclave
That was the seed of evil for the Jews."
I saw that e'en to Virgil wonder gave
The sight of him whose limbs so vilely stressed
Cross-like, the soil of timeless torment pave.
He then the friar with such a voice addressed:
"If naught prevents, may it please you to tell
If on our right there is the path we quest
That may for both of us be passable
Before we must on some black angels call
To come and to convey us from this well."
"Beyond thy hope"—he answered—"at a small
Distance, a rock arises that abuts
On the main shore and spans the gulches all

Except that here a break the archway cuts.
A path for you that ruin should provide:
Its coast inclines and out its bottom juts."
Bowing his head a while, then spoke my Guide:
"The matter was not stated in this guise
By him who works his hook on th' other side."
The friar then: "In Bologna much advice
I heard about the devil, and they said
That he a liar and father is of lies."
Then with great strides my Leader went ahead
Troubled in semblance with a wrathful heat;
And from those burden-bearers I, too, sped
After the marks of the beloved feet.

Line 3—The Franciscan Friars.
4—The Frog agreed to ferry the Mouse across a pond: midway it started to go down intending to drown its fare. While they were struggling the Kite swooped down and gobbled both of them.
25—Were I a mirror, thy external form would not be reflected on me as quickly as my mind's eye can pass to thy inner form—to thy thoughts.
45—Of the sixth gulch.
63—In Cologne on the Rhine was a famous Benedictine Abbey. Other interpretations are offered.
65—A story was current that Emperor Frederick II used to have some criminals wrapped in lead and thrown into a furnace.
104, etc.—The popular appelation of "Jovial Friars" had been given to a military-religious Order of Knights famous for their high living. The Order was soon suppressed. Catalano de' Malavolti was a Guelph, Loderingo degli Andalò a Ghibellin: both of Bologna. They were called to exercise jointly the office of Podestà in Florence: usually the office was held by one man only.
108—During their tenure, the two Friars caused the houses of the Uberti family to be destroyed: they were near the tower called the "Gardingo".
115—Caiaphas.
121—Annas and all the Pharisees.
124—The previous journey of Virgil to Hell had been before the death of Christ.

CANTO XXIV

ARGUMENT

Having gained with great effort the bridge over the seventh gulch and having crossed it, at the request of Dante the two Poets descend to the inside bank of the same and look upon a sandy waste filled with serpents. The serpents attack the sinners and wondrous transformations take place. Here are the Thieves, especially of sacred things.

When 'neath Aquarius, in the youthful year,
The Sun gives temper to his mane, and night
Grows till it reaches half a day's career;
And on the earth the frost imprints the bright
Image of his white sister, there to lie
But shortly, for his pen's temper is slight;
The humble churl whose stores are getting shy
Rises and looks and sees the hills and plains
All glowing white, whereon he smites his thigh:
Back in the house, he here and there complains
Like as the wretch who knows not what to do,
Then going out again, new hopes he gains
Seeing the world to a face of other hue
Changed in brief hour—and then he drives outdoor,
Taking his staff, to pasture lamb and ewe:

Thus had disheartened me my Counselor
When him I saw in such disturbéd mood
And came the salve as quickly to the sore.
For soon as by the broken bridge we stood
My Leader turned to me in aspect kind
As when by the hillside first him I view'd.
His arms outstretchéd, after in his mind
He had some counsel weighed and had his eyes
Well gauged the ruin, he graspéd me behind,
And as a man who acts and doth devise
Further and seems all things to anticipate,
Thus while he pushed me so that I could rise
Over a stone, another jutting slate
He noted, saying: "Grasp that other crest,
But try well first if it will hold thy weight."
It was no path for those by a mantle dressed,
For he so light, I with the help he lent,
From ledge to ledge with much fatigue progressed.
And only that that coast less eminent
Is than the other side—I cannot say
Of him, but I could not have made the ascent.
But Malebolge all in downward way
To the pit nethermost slopes from the bluff
Around, thus of its parts such is the lay
That one bank mounts, one drops, of ev'ry trough.
At last upon the summit we both swung
Up where the topmost stone is broken off.
My breath had been out of my lungs so wrung,
That reaching that, I could no more go on
And on the ground, right there, myself I flung.

"It is now time indeed such sloth to ban"
—My Master said—"for idling upon plumes
Or under quilt, brings glory to no man."
And that without, whoever life consumes,
On earth shall leave a vestige lasting less
Than smoke in air or, upon waters, spumes.
Therefore arise, o'ercome thy weariness
With that soul power that all barriers defies
If it but spurns the body and its distress.
Ahead a longer stair for thee there lies.
'Tis not enough to have left those: if clear
Are these my words, then act on mine advice."
I then arose and made some shift to appear
Furnished with zest more than I felt indeed,
Saying: "Go forth: I'm strong and have no fear."
Then on the crag we startéd to proceed:
'Twas jagged and narrow and hard to negotiate,
And did in steepness the last one exceed.
I spoke to hide my weakness while his gait
I kept; a voice then came from the next gutter
Which could but broken words articulate.
I could not make clear sense out of that splutter
Though standing now midway the bridge's rise,
Yet surely sounds of rage he seemed to utter.
Downward I bent, but still my living eyes
Could not pierce through that black and heavy pall.
—"Master"—I said—"let us by any guise
Reach the next rampart and go down the wall
For now the sounds I hear all meaning lack
And as I look I see no shape at all."

He said: "To thee no answer I give back
But by my act, for, after fair request,
Performance should be silent and not slack."
Then down the bridge to where its shoulders rest
Upon that eighth of banks we came, until
The gulch appeared to me all manifest.
And there I saw such an horrendous fill
Of snakes in shape and act ne'er known before
That all my blood in memory curdles, still.
Let Lybia cease from boasting of her shore,
Its Chelydri, Phareae and Jaculi,
Its Cenchri and Amphisbaena and many more;
For ne'er so many and varied plagues did she
Display, with also Ethiopia's own
Products and those from lands of the Red Sea.
Amidst such foul and dismal garrison
A nakéd people ran in fright around
Having no hope of hole or witching stone.
Upon their back a snake their hands held bound
And piercing through their shoulders like a spit
Its head and tail upon the belly wound.
When lo! to one on our side of the pit
Lept up a serpent and transfixed him through
Where neck and shoulders are together knit.
An O or I so fast pen never drew
As he took fire and burned, and a small mound
Of ashes from his body was left in view.
Then as he lay so undone upon the ground
The ashes gathered up themselves and rose
Into his body again, all at one bound.

Thus as great scholars, as we know, depose,
The Phoenix rises from her body charred
When the five hundredth year is getting close.
She holds all herbs and grains in disregard;
Amomum only and incense tears her food,
Her winding sheet is made of myrrh and nard.
As one, not knowing how, falls where he stood
Pulled down by a demon's power or otherwise
By hidden ill that may his veins occlude,
Rising again he turns around his eyes
Wholly bewildered by the great distress
That he has suffered and, while looking, sighs:
The risen wretch appeared amazed no less.
O how exacting God's omnipotence
Crashing such heavy blows, for just redress!
My Guide then asked who he had been and whence,
And answered he: "I rained from Tuscany
But a short while ago to this foul fence.
Bestial, not human life best suited me,
Mule that I was—as Vanni Fucci, beast,
Knew me Pistoia, my den quite properly."
I to my Guide: "That he remain, insist
And ask what crime has brought him here, for I
Knew him as man who in blood and strifes would feast."
The sinner, who understood, yet did not try
To feign—with mind and face me alone he sought
While sordid shame did his semblance dye.
Then said he: "That by thee I have been caught
In this distress, for that now more I grieve
Than when, above, I to my death was brought.

Thy question unreplied I cannot leave.
Here so far down I stand for it was I
Who did the sacristy's rich dowery thieve.
And against others falsely was raised the cry.
But lest thou find some pleasure in this view
If ever 'scapest this lapless misery,
Give ear to this forecast and hear me through:
Shorn of her Blacks, Pistoia first shall fail,
Then Florence men and manners shall renew.
Now Mars a vapor draws from Magra's vale
Of turbid, threat'ning clouds forming the core—
And like impetuous and bitter gale
Shall upon Pescia's field the battle roar.
When he shall suddenly dispel the mist
And ev'ry White shall then be wounded sore.
Now mayest thou also have some poisoned grist."

Line 1, etc.—The Sun enters the constellation of Aquarius in the early spring, a season of rains. The night is then about 12 hours long and the morning frost on the ground looks like snow (the white sister).

13—The frost is gone: the fields look green.

21—See Canto I.

37—Given the general slope of Malebolge the inner bank of every gulch is less elevated from the floor than the outer one.

85—The Lybian desert was famous for its serpents. The names following are of more or less mythical reptiles.

89—Ethiopia and the coast of the Red Sea were also noted for the production of strange serpents.

93—Of hole to hide in, or of "witching stone" that might render them invisible, according to a popular belief. In the text the stone is called "heliotrope".

107—Mythical bird supposed to be born again from its ashes every 500th year.

114—Epilepsy and such diseases were thought to cause a closing of the veins.

125—A man from Pistoia known for his ferocious character. Was commonly called "the Beast."

129—The circle of the Violents would best suit him—thought Dante.

138—He refers to a robbery of sacred utensils from a church in Pistoia for which others were falsely accused; but the crime was finally brought home to Vanni Fucci and his accomplices.

143—The feud known as of the "Blacks and Whites" originated in Pistoia and then extended to Florence. At first the Blacks were expelled from Pistoia with the help of the Florentine Whites, but these in turn were expelled from both cities, later, by the Blacks. This reversal of fortunes was caused mainly by the part played in it by Marquis Malaspina from the Magra's valley—in the province of Lunigiana, north west of Pistoia. He—"the core of turbid, threatening clouds"—came out as champion of the Blacks and gathering their forces about him administered a heavy defeat to the Whites "on Pescia's field". Pescia is a town a few miles from Pistoia: Pistoia is about twenty miles from Florence.

149—"He", is still Mars.

CANTO XXV

ARGUMENT

Still in the seventh gulch (of the Thieves) Dante observes certain marvelous transformations from human to serpent's form and viceversa.

Ending his words, the thief impenitent
Both fists with crossed thumbs in spiteful sign
Lifted and said: "Take, God; for thee thy are meant."
Thereon the serpents proved good friends of mine
As one about his neck its body wound
As if to say: "Enough of words of thine."
And then his arms another serpent bound
Clinching itself in front so forcibly
That all arm motion checked the sinner found.
Ah, why Pistoia, shouldst thou not decree
To burn thyself and e'en thy name dispel:
Thou worse in sin than those who founded thee.
Throughout the darkened terraces of Hell
No soul I met 'gainst God so full of pride,
Not even he who from Thebes' ramparts fell.

He ran away, while was his tongue so tied,
And a Centaur I saw coming in haste
Who shouted: "Where, where doth the scoffer hide?"
There are fewer snakes in the Maremman waste
Methinks, than on his back had made their lair,
Save where the beast is by man's form replaced.
Back of his mane his mighty shoulders bear
A dragon lying with his wings outspread:
All that he meets are kindled by his flare.
"That one is Cacus"—then my Master said—
"Who of Mount Aventine beneath the rock
A lake of blood oft with his slaughters shed.
With the rest of his kind he does not walk
Because to act with fraudulence he chose
When stealing from the neighboring great flock.
Thereon his treacherous works were brought to a close
Under Hercules' mace; and hardly he could
Feel only ten out of a hundred blows."
While thus he spoke, his quarry again pursued
The Centaur. Then by me and by my Guide
Unnoticed, near the embankment where we stood
Three spirits came, and: "Who are you?"—they cried.
Thus did their presence our attention claim
And made us leave the story of him aside.
I knew not who they were, but then it came
To pass, as oft it does in such a case,
That one another they were forced to name.
Thus: "Where is Cianfa left?"—one of them says,
And cautioning my Leader to give heed
My finger straight from chin to nose I place.

If slow thou art, O reader, to concede
The truth of this my tale, no wonderment;
I hardly trust myself, who saw the deed.

While I with startled brow look on, intent,
A snake six-footed leaps in front of one
And fastens him with shakeless ligament.

The middle claws seemed to his belly ingrown,
The upper ones his arms held like a vise,
While the snake's teeth bit into each cheekbone.

The lower claws were spread upon his thighs;
The tail between inserted and upflung
Upon the sinner's back was stretched lengthwise.

Never was ivy with a grip so strong
Rooted to a tree as there that monster weird
With all its members on the other's clung.

As if of heated wax both forms adhered
Close to each other, mixing e'en their hue,
And in its proper form neither appeared.

Thus in a burning parchment one may view
A color brown proceed along the flame
And white dies out while black is not yet true.

Gazed th'other two, and I heard them exclaim:
"Alas, Agnel, what change comes over thee!
Another thou are not, nor yet the same."

Now the two heads one only seem to be
And on one face wherein two figures fade
Two semblances commingled I can see.

Out of four limbs two arms are being made
And thighs and legs as well as belly and chest
Grow to such forms that ne'er man's eye surveyed.

The former aspect there was all suppressed
In that foul shape that two and no form showed:
Moving, that thing with tardy steps progressed.
As seems the lizard, 'neath the heavy goad
Of the dog-days, like lightning fast to gain
Another hedge, when crossing o'er the road,
Thus toward the bellies of those other twain
A burning snakelet quickly ran, whose crust
Was black and livid like a pepper grain.
And reaching one of them sharply it percussed
That part where first our aliment is brought,
Then, stretched in front of him, fell to the dust.
The one transfixed kept looking but said naught;
Nay, he did yawn, while on his feet upright
As man by sleep or by a fever caught.
Both on each other fixéd held their sight:
One from his mouth, the other from his sore
Poured forth a smoke that seemed, half-way, to unite.
Let Lucan now quote in his tale no more
Sabellius and Nassidius; let him list
To what shall be released from this my lore.
And let Ovidius from his song desist
Of Arethusa and Cadmus: that to a font,
This changed to snake—but I have better grist.
For never did he bring two forms in front
Of one another, ready to renew
Their matter with each other's shape and wont.
The changéd creatures in this manner grew:
In form of fork split up his tail the snake,
The stricken one his feet together drew.

Meanwhile the legs and thighs appeared to bake
To a single mass, and shortly, in my regard,
No sign appeared of where had been the break.
The forkéd tail took on the semblance marred
In him in front: its skin from rough and rank
Soft now became and grew the other hard.
Then the man's arms within the armpits sank
And what had been feet of the beast, not long,
Grew to the length from which those others shrank.
I saw the snake's hind feet together strung
Become the members that a man conceals,
While, from the sinner's own, two feet half sprung.
As each of them another hue reveals
Under the smoke that also weaves new hair
Upon one body, while the other peels,
One stands upright, the other drops, but ne'er
Their evil lamps did swerve, under whose glow
Changes about the muzzle of the pair.
The one erect up draws it, and the flow
Of matter needless to the temples' span
Causes those hollowed cheeks their ears to grow.
What is retained—as not all backward ran—
Of its excess makes to the face a nose
While the lips thicken as befits a man.
The lying one his muzzle forward throws
And draws the ears within his head of beast
As snail that doth its tentacles enclose.
The tongue that was compact and quickly eased
Itself in speech is cleft—while lumpéd tight
The other's points become; the smoke has ceased.

The soul with shape of animal, in flight
Runs hissing o'er the valley's crowded bed,
The other after him sputters his spite.
Turning on him his novel back, he said
To the third shade: "Let Buoso take my place
And run a while with a four-footed tread."
That seventh ballast thus in changing face
I saw, and let be excuse the novelty
If aught my pen upon this subject strays.
And though my eyes could but confusedly see
And by that strangeness was my soul dismayed,
Covertly enough not one of them could flee
So that Puccio Sciancato could evade
My sight: he alone his shape had kept
Of the first three that came; the other shade
Was he whose loss by thee, Gaville, is wept.

Line 2—A vulgar gesture of insult.

10—It was thought that Pistoia had been founded by refugees from the defeated army of Catilina.

13—Capaneus. See Canto XIV, 46, etc.

25—Cacus, whom Dante imagines as a Centaur, is not with the rest of them among the Violent on account of his frauds. In his cattle-stealing he used to drag his prey backward to his lair on Mount Aventine (Rome) to disguise their tracks. Having stolen some cattle belonging to Hercules—"the neighboring great flock"—was slaughtered by him.

43—Cianfa, of the Donati of Florence, a famous thief. He has been changed into a six-footed snake which shall later appear. (Line 69).

50—This is Agnolo Brunelleschi, another famous Florentine thief.

63—This snakelet is the transformed shade of Guercio Cavalcanti; he changes shape with Buoso degli Abati: both Florentines.

81—In the mid-summer the Sun is in the constellation of Canis, dog. Hence the "canicular" days.

94—Lucan relates some stories of soldiers in Cato's army retreating through Lybia who were bitten by serpents. Sabellius was reduced to ashes, Cassidius bloated so that his belly burst.

97—Stories in Ovidius' Metamorphosis.

121—Now the figure upright is that of the snake in process of becoming man; the figure on the ground is that of the man becoming a snake.

140—The third shade is Puccio Sciancato—also a Florentine. He has remained unchanged.

142—Dante calls these sinners the "ballast" of the seventh gulch: or worthless matter.

151—Guercio Cavalcanti, turned from snake to man (line 83) was wept by Gaville, a town on the Upper Arno, because the citizens of it having slain him for his robberies, suffered the revenge of his kin.

CANTO XXVI

ARGUMENT

The poets are now viewing the eighth gulch of the eighth circle, in which are punished the Fraudulent Counselors, their shades being wrapped in a flame. Of these, Ulysses tells the tale of his final disaster.

Rejoice, O Florence, since thou art so great
Thy wings are beating over land and sea,
And e'en in Hell thy fame does not abate.
Five of thy citizens, of high degree,
I found among the robbers, whence I feel
Deep shame and little honor comes to thee.
But if the dreams near morn the truth reveal
What Prato and others wish shall be thy meed
Ere a short turn of time's relentless wheel.
Were it already, it weren't too early indeed.
Oh, were it now, since it cannot be stayed!
I'll bear it harder as my years proceed.
Leaving that place, again our way we made
Upon the rocky stairs of our descent,
I following my Guide and with his aid.

Thus on the crag our lonesome way we went
Over its rocks and ledges where in vain
Labored the foot if hand no succor lent.

I then was grieved and stabs me again the pain
Recalling what I saw, and must be checked
Now more than e'er, of poesy the rein

Lest she might stray from where Art would direct
And lest what boon fair star or better thing
Has granted me, I should myself reject.

As villain, on the hillside loitering
When he who illumes the wide world and the skies
For shorter hours is hid beneath night's wing—

The time when to the gnats give place the flies—
Sees the glow-worms that flicker o'er the dell—
Where haply his plowland or vineyard lies:

Thus that eighth gulch gave me such spectacle
Of many flames that came into my view
When nearness did the bottom haze dispel.

And as he whose revenge was carried through
By bears, Elijah's chariot rising high
Saw when the rearing horses upward flew,

And though its wake he followed with his eye
He could but see the glowing flame outside
That like a cloudlet rose into the sky:

Thus through the narrow gullet I descried
Those flames that in no way their booty show
While all within themselves a sinner hide.

Erect upon the bridge I leaned out so,
If quick to grasp a stone I had not been,
Without a thrust, I would have plunged below.

On seeing me so intent upon that scene
My Leader spoke: "Therein the spirits stay
And what burns them surrounds them as a screen."
"Master"—said I—"thy words to me convey
A greater sureness, but I had been led
To such belief already and craved to say:
Whom does conceal that flame with double head
Such haply as rose from Eteocles' pyre
Which to his brother too, was burial bed?"
And he: "Ulysses suffers in that fire
With Diomed: together in their pain
As they together did boldly conspire.
Within that fire now mourn the crafty twain
The ambush of the horse which was the door
Through which came forth the noble Roman strain.
Therein the fraud is also wept wherefore
Deidamia's grief e'en death does not assuage:
For the Palladium, too, is paid the score."
"If they can speak"—I said—"from that red cage,
Master, with all my heart I pray thee now,
And of thousand prayers let this be a gage,
That my awaiting here thou may'st allow
Until the forkéd flame shall pass this place.
See how my longing bends toward it my brow."
He answered: "Thy request is worthy of praise,
And my own will therefore with thine agrees;
But see thy voice to them thou dost not raise.
I shall be spokesman, knowing what would please
Thy fancy, while they might resent, perchance
Words from thy mouth, as they were both from Greece."

When closer came the flame in its advance
And place and time my Guide as proper knew
In such a form I heard sound his demands:
"O ye, within that flame enclosing two,
If, living, for your fame I have done well,
Be great or little my desert from you
For that high poem where your figures dwell,
Stay here awhile and how to him death came
When he was lost, let one of you, pray, tell."
The greater horn out of that ancient flame
Amidst a murmur then began to shake—
Worried by wind a flame would look the same—
Then as if it had been a tongue that spake
I saw its fiery tip toss to and fro
And into sound of words I heard it break:
"When Circe had held me, as well you know,
A year and over, near Caieta's shore—
Before the time Aeneas had called it so—
Nor my son's fondness, nor the grief that tore
My aged parent, nor the love deserved
Which would have gi'en my spouse the joy hoped for,
Could have within my heart that passion swerved
For which I searched the world's remote confine
And vice and virtue in mankind observed .
I left and sailed the high and open brine
Alone, with only one boat and with that band
But small, that from my risks did not decline.
Toward Spain on either side we viewed the land,
Morocco, too, and Sardinia; and to the rest
Of isles that that sea bathes our ship we mann'd.

When by our labors and by age oppressed,
I and my partners reached that narrow way
Where Hercules had set his warnings, lest
Man further out should his advance essay.
Seville already was left upon our rear
To the right hand, and leftward Ceuta lay.
"To what remains"—I said—"of your career,
To this brief hour before your sense is spent,
Brethren, through a hundred thousand perils, here
Arrived unto the closing Occident,
Do not deny the experience to run
With Phoebus to the unpeopled continent.
Think of your noble origin and shun
A brutish life; seek ye as man's own weal,
Knowledge and virtue, always further on.'
Such my brief sermon made my partners feel
So eager for the goal yet unattained
That I could hardly have kept back their zeal.
As to the point of dawn our poop was trained
Our oars became as wings to our mad flight
In which upon our left constantly we gained.
All of its stars already I saw by night
On th'other pole; our own was then so low
The ocean floor itself hid it from sight.
Five times relumed and quenched had been the glow
Beneath the moon after the time we steered
Into that mighty sea our flimsy bow,
And then a mount ahead I saw that reared
So high above the waves its brownish flanks:
Nowhere to me had such a height appeared.

We then rejoiced, but soon amidst our ranks
Woe spread a whirlwind coming from the lee
Which of our vessels struck the foremost planks.
Three times it hurled it 'round with all the sea,
The fourth, it lifted high its poop and pushed
Downward its prow, for such was Fate's decree.
Then over us the smoothéd billows hushed."

Line 1—Reference is made to the five thieves met with in the preceding Canto.
8—Prato is a town about ten miles from Florence, midway to Pistoia. Prato and other neighboring cities were jealous of Florence and desired her downfall.
26—When the sun shines during a longer day: in summer.
34—The incident is related in *Kings IV*. Eliseus was insulted by some children who were then chased by bears. He witnessed the ascent of Elijah into heaven in a chariot of fire.
41—Their booty: their contents.
52—Eteocles and Polynices were sons of Oedipus. Placed on the same funeral pyre, the flame parted as a mark of their hatred even beyond death.
55—Ulysses and Diomed, companions in arms at the siege of Troy. They planned the ruse of the wooden horse through which came the ruin of that city and the exile of Aeneas whose descendants founded Rome.
62—Deidamia was abandoned by Achilles at the court of Nycomedes when he was persuaded by Ulysses to join the Greeks at Troy.
63—Ulysses and Diomed stole the statue of Pallas (the Palladium) from Troy.
75—On account of their pride: Greeks must have cared little for the Latins as these had later placed all Greece under their sway.
82—The Aeneid.
91, etc.—Ulysses remained for one year in the island of the sorceress Circe, near Caieta (not far from Naples); but that was before Aeneas had so named the place.
96—Penelopes.
108—The present Straits of Gibraltar: the Pillars of Hercules were there set.
110—Seville, in Spain; Ceuta, in Morocco.
117—Phoebus, the sun. An ancient tradition spoke of a western continent.
124—The poop toward the East, the prow toward the West.
127—That means that they had passed the Equator.
130—Five times the moon had waxed and waned: five months had passed.
133—The mountain of Purgatory which no living man could approach.

CANTO XXVII

ARGUMENT

Still in the eighth gulch: after the flame of Ulysses has gone another one calls the attention of the Poets. It contains the soul of Guido from Montefeltro who inquires about his native region, Romagna, and explains how he came to be among the Fraudulent Counselors.

The flame had straightened and the sound was spent
That formed its words; from us it was soon gone,
My Master having given his assent.
Following that another flame then shone
In front of us, and to its top whence came
A sound confused, our eager eyes went on.
Like the Sicilian bull destined to claim
First victim—as well justice did provide—
Him who had tempered with his file its frame,
Bellowed the groaning of the wretch inside
And though of brass constructed all around
Sounded as if its own distress it cried—
Thus as at first no way nor vent they found
In that hard mold of fire, converted were
The saddened words into that wordless sound.

But when they caught a passage through the flare
Up to the top, which they kept quivering
Just as the tongue that formed them out of air,
We clearly heard: "O thou toward whom I fling
My voice and who just said'st in Lombard speech:
"Go now, I wish from thee no other thing"
Though here perhaps a little late I reach,
Pray bear to stay a while and speak with me:
It irks not me, shut in this burning niche.
If to this sightless world but recently
Thou hast arrived from that sweet land of mine,
Whence all my guilt I carry, Italy,
Romagna doth to peace or war incline?
For I was from the hills Urbino 'tween
And the source of the waters Tiberine."
As I still downward bent was looking keen
I felt my Master nudging at my side
Who said: "Speak thou, a Latin this has been."
Ready to make his query satisfied
Without delay I told him what he sought:
"O soul, whom those enkindled raiments hide,
Never was thy Romagna, and now is not
Within its tyrants' heart, deprived of war
But in the open now no war is brought.
Ravenna stands as for long time before:
Polenta's eagle quietly keeps its nest
With wings as far as Cervia spreading o'er.
The town that was for such long time hard prest
Then in such bloody heaps the Frenchmen strew,
'Neath the green paws finds now itself at rest.

46 The old Verrucchian mastiff and the new
Through whom Montagna in such foul manner died
Still where it was their wont their teeth now screw.
49 Lamone's city and Santerno's bide
Beneath the lion's cub on white imposed
Who 'twixt springtime and winter changes side.
52 And that whose flank is by the Savio closed
In part is tyranny, in part free state
Just as it lies 'twixt plain and mountain coast.
55 And now about thyself to me relate:
So may thy name be honored in the world;
More than the others be not obdurate."
58 After the moaning flame a while had purled
In its own way, it shook its pointed spear
This way and that, then such a voice it hurled:"
61 "Did I believe that my reply would hear
Someone who to the world might yet return
No flicker on this flame would now appear.
64 But as no one goes back from this deep bourne
Alive, if truth I hear, I fear no shame
From what thou may'st now from my answer learn.
67 A man of arms, I cordelier became,
Trusting, so girt, my evil deeds to shrive;
And my belief would not have missed its aim.
70 'Twas the Great Priest, a plague on him, to drive
Me back into the ways of my old guilt:
The how and why to unravel I shall strive.
73 The while of flesh and bone my body was built
Such as a mother gives, my works were not
Of lion but those in which a fox is skill'd.

For clever ambush and for hidden plot
I knew all tricks and of my many a feat
To the end of the world the fame was brought.
But when I reached that season of the fleet
Career of mortals when to trim the sail
And coil the ropes for everyone is meet,
What had me pleased before now made me quail:
Penance I did and was absolved from sin.
Ah me! It should have been to some avail.
But he the Prince of the new Sanhedrin,
Who 'round the Lateran a war had famn'd—
And not to battle Jew or Sarrasin
For only on Christians he had raised his hand;
None of his foes had made proud Acre bleed
Nor had been merchant in the Sultan's land—
To his high office and priesthood no heed
He paid, nor reckoned he the cord that tied
My loins, and used to gird a leaner breed.
But as the one who from Soracte's side
Sylvester called to heal his leprosy,
E'en thus, to assuage the fever of his pride
This man, as for a master, called for me
Asking advice. He saw me mutely object
As drunken ravings his words seemed to be.
He then spoke thus: "Let not thy heart suspect.
I shrive thee now; tell me of some device
That Prenestino be subdued and wreck't.
Lock and unlock the door of Paradise
I can, as thou well know'st; two are the keys,
Those that my predecessor did not prize."

Then I was moved by such commanding pleas
To speak where worse advice seem'd naught to say,
And answered: "Father, since thy blessing frees
Me from the sin that on my soul must weigh,
A promise long and a fulfillment short
That mighty seat shall bring into thy sway."
When I was dead Saint Francis came to escort
My soul on high, but a black Angel said:
"Take thou him not; such wrong I ill support.
Amidst my sorry crowd he shall be led
Because he gave the counsel fraudulent:
Since then my hand has been upon his head.
None can absolve those who do not repent;
To will and to repent cannot combine:
The contradiction would not that consent."
Alas, unhappy me! What sorrow was mine
When he took me and said: "It is not writ,
Perhaps, that I can follow a logic line."
Minos I faced; he sent me down the pit
Folding eight times his tail o'er his hard back,
And when its end he had, quite furious, bit,
He said: "The thieving fire shall this insack."
Therefore where thou see'st me I now am lost
And walking in this robe myself I rack."
When thus the sinner from his speech had paused
The flame moved on with its bemoaning shade
And its keen-pointed horn writhed and tossed.
Forward my Guide and I our way then made
Upon the crag and o'er that other span
Bridging the ditch in which the fee is paid
By those who sowing strife a load take on.

Line 7—Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigentum (Sicily) was offered by Perillus a brazen bull in which victims could be enclosed: the metal being heated, their cries would resemble the bellowing of a bull. Perillus was the first victim.

21—Virgil had spoken those words to Ulysses.

29—The speaker is the famous condottiere Guido from the castle of Montefeltro, a place high in the Appennine between the city of Urbino and the source of the Tiber.

40—Guido da Polenta, who bore an eagle on his shield, was seigneur of Ravenna and Cervia, both Romagna cities on the Adriatic.

43—Forlì, who withstood such a long siege from French troops and then slaughtered them (1282) was under the Ordelaffi whose shield bore a green lion.

46—Father and son of the Malatesta family, originally from the castle of Verrucchio. They still had their teeth on the city of Rimini. Mastiffs, because ferocious tyrants. They had put a knight named Montagna to a miserable death.

49—Faenza, on the river Lamone, and Imola on the Santerno are still under the Pagani family. A lion's cub, azure, on white was their arms. They supported in turn the Guelphs and the Ghibellines.

52—Cesena, bounded on one side by the river Savio, was then a free city but surrounded by tyrants. It lay on a plain but close to the Appennine.

67—Guido, late in life, became a Franciscan. The Friars wore a rude cord as a belt.

70—Pope Boniface VIII.

89—The fall of the fortress of Acre, last stronghold of the Christians on the coast of Palestine took place in 1291.

90—No commerce, especially in arms or victuals, was permitted with the Sarrasins except by Papal dispensation.

93—Dante hints at a deterioration of the Franciscan Order.

94—Constantine the Great, according to legend, called Pope Sylvester who had taken refuge in the caves of Mount Soracte, near Rome, that he might be healed of his leprosy, through the Pope's prayers.

102—Prenestino, a fortress near Rome, where the powerful Colonnesi family, opposed to Boniface, had taken refuge.

105—Celestine V, who had retired from the Papal seat.

107—To say nothing seemed less advisable, after such promises.

110—That is: promise a great deal and keep little.

126—Minos himself was horrified at that sin.

127—The "thieving" fire because it takes away the human form of the sinners.

136—The ninth gulch: of the sowers of scisms.

CANTO XXVIII

ARGUMENT

In the ninth gulch are the sowers of scisms or religious divisions; not merely intellectual heretics as those in the flaming sepulchers of Canto X, but those who promoted wars by their false doctrines.. Others who gave fraudulent and murderous advices are also here: all are afflicted by frightful wounds.

Who could with words even unbound by rhymes
Tell all the blood and wounds I now saw there,
Though were the tale repeated many times?
Every tongue would of that task despair
For in man's speech and memory, the space
To compass all of that is but too spare.
If ever were assembled all the race
That in Apulia's fortune-ridden plain
Grieved for the blood that was shed in the frays
Against the Romans and the unnumbered slain
In the long war where booty of many a ring
Was heaped, as Livius' truthful words maintain;
And those who felt of heavy blows the sting
Contrasting Robert Guiscard, and those, too,
Whose bones are by Ceprano mouldering

Where ev'ry Apulian to his king untrue
Was found; and those by Tagliacozzo, where
Unarmed Alardo many thousands slew—

And one were showing his stump, and one the tear
Wide in his members: to the hideous shapes
In that ninth gulch, all that would not compare.

Losing the middle or side stave, ne'er gapes
A cask as one I saw amidst that throng
Cut from his chin to where foul wind escapes.

Between his legs his very entrails were strung;
His heart appeared and that foul sac where end
The foods that man ingests and turn to dung.

As all attention towards him I bend
He looks at me and says, tearing his breast
With his own hands: "See how myself I rend.

Watch Mahomet from his own body wrest
His flesh. Before me weeping goes Alì
Cleft in his face from chin to hairy crest.

And all the rest thou may'st in this gulch see
Sowers of scism and scandalous discord
Were all; wherefore so cleft they now must be.

A devil is back there by whom we're gored
So cruelly; all of this ilk must go
Again under the cutting of his sword

Each time we walk around this road of woe;
Because our form has been wholly replaced
Ere any of us goes by that fiendish foe.

But who art thou that on the crag delay'st
Thus to put off, perhaps, the penalty
That they self-charges have for thee appraised?"

"Nor ta'en by death, nor led by guilt is he"—
Answered my Master—"to this place of pain,
But that by him all things experienced be
I, who am dead, must through this dark domain
Lead him from gulch to gulch: and true is my word
As now in front of thee my sight is plain."
More than a hundred. when such words were heard,
Stopt in the ditch to look at me and forgot
Their torture, so they were wonder stirred.
"Tell Fra Dolcino then that he take thought,
Since shortly thou perhaps shall see the sun,
—Or soon he too down here shall share my lot—
And gather food, lest snow shall press upon
His force and aid the Novarese to score
A vict'ry, else not lightly to be won."
Having drawn up a foot when ready for
His going, Mahomet thus spoke and left
Stretching his raiséd foot upon the floor.
Another shade with piercéd throat and 'reft
Of nose clear to the brows and on whose face
A missing ear showed only for the cleft,
Who, with the rest, had stopt in awe to gaze,
Oped his windpipe ahead of all and said:
—His throat all outward red from bloody sprays—
"O thou who hast no sentence merited,
Whom to have met above I call to mind
If by strange likeness I am not misled,
To Pier from Medicina give a kind
Thought if thou shouldst again see the sweet plain
To Marcabò down from Vercelli inclined.

And from my part warn Fano's worthiest twain,
Sir Guido I mean, and Angiolello as well
That from their vessel thrown—if is not vain
What to us here is given to foretell—
Close to Cattolica they shall be drowned
Through the betrayal of a tyrant fell.
Between Majorca and the Cyprian Sound
Neptune ne'er saw such crime by hand of man,
Nor by Greek people nor by pirate hound.
That traitor curs'd who only sees with one
And holds the city—which, one here with me,
Wishes his eyes had never fed upon—
Will make them come to a parley upon the sea,
Then will contrive that 'gainst Focara's wind
They shall not need a vow or other plea."
And I: "Explain to me and help to find
The one so bitter toward that land he saw;
And I of thee the world shall fain remind."
Then he both hands press'd hard upon the jaw
Of one close by, and oped his mouth and cried:
"'Tis he; but words from him no one can draw.
He is the one who drowned the doubts that tried
Caesar by stating that a man prepared
Causes, by waiting, damage to his side."
How terrified, methought, the sinner stared,
His tongue right from the roots having been lopped:
Curio, who once such a bold speech had dared.
Another then with hands to the wrist chopped ,
Cried, lifting up his stumps through the dark air
So that upon his face the foul blood dropped:

"Speak also of Mosca, when thou art up there,
Who said, alas!—Things done must have a head—
To Tuscany much ill that seed did bear."
"And death to thine own house"—I promptly said.
Then with another woe upon his woe
Like sad and maddened man away he sped.
But I stood there to view row after row,
And saw a thing I'd dare not to conjure
By words alone, having no proof to show,
Were I not by my conscience made secure,
That good companion that a man makes bold
Under the buckler of his feeling pure.
I then beheld and still, methinks, behold
A headless trunk that was about to pass
Walking amidst and like that sorry fold.
He held in hand his own head's hairy mass
So that in front it dangled lantern-wise
And that, looking at us, cried out: "Alas!"
A lamp to him he made of his own eyes:
Two were but one and one was two; how so
Can be, He knows who did such things devise.
When 'neath the bridge he was about to go,
He lifted high the head at his arm's end
So might his voice be not too far nor low.
"See thou"—he spoke—"my harrowing amend,
Who view'st the dead, still breathing. Didst thou see
Harder on anyone God's wrath descend?
And that thou may'st bring back some news of me
Bertram de Born am I, the counselor
Whom the young King heard to his injury.

Son against father prompted I to war;
The wicked goading of Achitophel
For Absalon and David did no more.
As persons so close-joined through my arts fell
Apart, thus parted is, alas, my brain
From what is in this trunk its principle.
Thus doth in me the counterpoise obtain."

Line 8—Apulia, a province south and east of Rome, bordering on the Adriatic.

10—The Romans fought long wars to conquer Apulia.

11—The Second Punic War which lasted 17 years. In the course of it Hannibal defeated the Romans at Cannae when the rings from the finger of fallen Roman knights filled several pecks.

14—The Norman Robert Guiscard conquered Apulia in 1060.

15—During the campaign of Charles of Anjou against Manfredi a battle was fought at Ceprano. On that occasion the Apulian nobles deserted Manfredi's standards.

17—Another battle in the same campaign. Count Alardo by his strategy assured Charles' victory.

31—Mahomet, the founder of Islam.

32—Alì, Mahomet's son-in-law.

45—The self-charges of the sinners before Minos.

55—Leader of a large group of religious enthusiasts in northern Lombardy. Was taken in 1305 mainly because provisions failed him on account of a snow blockade. In a crusade against him were prominent the forces from the city of Novara.

73—A noble from Medicina, in Romagna, who had stirred up civic discord. Dante evidently had met him personally somewhere in Lombardy, which is the plain declining from Vercelli, in Piedmont, to Marcabò, a now ruined castle at the mouth of the Po.

37—Two gentlemen from the city of Fano (Romagna) whom a Malatesta from Rimini invited to a parley aboard a ship and whom he caused to be thrown into the sea near Cattolica, a town on the seashore just north of Rimini.

72—The most oriental part of the Mediterranean, by the island of Majorca and the Straits of Cyprus: the scene of many foul deeds.

85—This Malatesta had only one eye.

86—See below, Line 96 etc.

89—Focara, a promontory near Cattolica where often blows a head wind which impedes the approach of the port.

102—Curio, who advised Caesar to cross the Rubicon: this river is not far from Rimini, the city held by the Malatesta in Dante's time.

106—Mosca de' Lamberti who precipitated the feud of the Blacks and Whites in Florence by urging his friends to the murder of a youth of the Buondelmonti family. His saying had passed into a proverb.

109—The Lamberti were heavy sufferers in the ensuing strife.

135—Viscount of Hautefort; induced a strife between Henry the Young of England and his father, Henry II.

142—The "counterpoise' 'is the law of justice that fits the punishment to the offense.

CANTO XXIX

ARGUMENT

In the tenth and last of the gulches dividing the VIII Circle are found the Falsifiers, afflicted by repulsive diseases that make their body emit unbearable stenches. In the first group of them Dante meets some famous Alchemists.

The crowd so vast, the divers wounds and dire
Had with their woe my eyes thus inebriated
That to stay there and weep they felt desire.
Then Virgil said: "Thy sight is not satiated?
Why keep'st thy gaze still fixéd on that trail
Down, o'er the woeful spirits mutilated?
No other gulch has made thee so to fail.
Think, if thou carest to number them, that quite
Twenty-two miles is all around this vale.
Beneath our feet the moon illumes the night.
Little remains of granted time's outlay
And much is to be seen beyond this sight."
"Hadst thou observed"—I hastened then to say—
"What I was viewing with such eagerness
Wouldst not have grudged to me a longer stay."
Meanwhile he moved and I with him no less
Hurriedly, giving him such a reply
And adding: "In that cave, amidst the press

On which I gazed with such a fixéd eye
One of my blood, methinks, is paying for
The sin whose price comes, in that gulch, so high."
Then spoke my Master: "Let thy thoughts no more
Henceforth be torn by him and by his fault;
Think of aught else: leave him amidst his gore.
For at the bridge's foot I saw him halt
Pointing a threat'ning finger with great rage
At thee—Geri del Bello I heard him called.
But Altaforte's Lord did then so engage
Thy mind entire, thou failedst in looking thence
At him; meanwhile he followed his cortege."
"Master of mine, his death by violence"—
I said—"not yet avenged by anyone
Partaking in the shame of that offense,
Made him contemptuous: so he was gone
Without a word, if right I explain his ways;
For that he has from me more pity won."
We had, thus speaking, reached the nearest place
Whence would that other valley's very bed
Show plainly, if there the light had stronger rays.
There Malebolge's final cloister spread
Itself beneath our eyes and came to view
The many friars that there inhabited.
And various plaints at me like arrows flew
Their points by sorrow sharpened and by gall,
So to my ears both hands I quickly drew.
If Valdichiana's ev'ry hospital,
Maremma's and Sardinia's, from July
Down to September would their ills pour all

Into one ditch—what I could there descry
Would be such horror, and a stench so rank
As out of rotting flesh therefrom rose high.

Now we proceed along the farthest bank
From that long crag, while leftward still we bear.
Then grew my sight more vivid down the flank

And to the bottom where the minister
Of the High Lord, Justice infallible
Deals with the forgers, all enrolléd there.

To a greater sorrow, I think, could not impell
Aegina with all its people languishing
And its air heavy with such an evil spell

That, to the smallest worm, each living thing
Fell lifeless down, and then that ancient folk—
As poets for a truthful story sing—

From seed of ants again to life awoke;
Than did those leprous shades in many a stack
Visible through that valley's misty smoke.

Some of another on the belly or back
Lay sprawling, and yet others on all four
From place to place crawled on the dismal track.

Silently we moved and slowly on the high shore,
Our eyes and ears upon that tribe intent
That could not lift their persons from the floor.

I saw two sitting, 'gainst each other bent
As cover set to cover on the braise;
From head to foot with scabs they were besprent.

Ne'er I have seen a groom such zeal to place
To curry a horse, the while his master waits,
Or even one who awak'd unwilling stays,

As there without a rest each sinner grates
With his own nails his skin, though naught avails
Against their itching rage that ne'er abates.
Their burning scab was strippéd by their nails
As bream is cleaned by knife on back or breast
Or other fish that has the largest scales.
"O thou who with thy fingers ravelest
Thy skin, and pinchers mak'st of them"—my Guide
One of that crouching couple thus addrest—
"Tell if among the souls that here abide
Is any Latin; so thy busy hand
Never through eternity be its nails denied."
"We both, so wasted here, in Latin land
Have lived"—one spoke amidst his tears of woe—
But who art thou who voicest such demand?"
My Master spoke: "I am assigned to go
Leading this living man from round to round
And Hell entire to him I plan to show."
What help in mutual leaning they had found
Was lost as both to me a-trembling turned
With all the rest who heard on the rebound.
And my good Master, all with me concerned,
Told me to speak to them; and I began,
As thus of his acquiescence I had learned.
"As I desire that from the mind of man
In the first world, your memory may not flee,
But that it live and many years bespan,
Tell who you are and what your ancestry:
For all your fierce and hideous pain, no fear
Should bar your telling of your name to me."

"Aretin I"—one spoke—"and my career
Alberto of Siena ended on the flame;
But what brought me to death leads not me here.
Truly I told him, of him but making game,
That through the air, at will, I could have flown:
He, short of wit, and curious of my claim
Would that such art of mine to him were shown.
As I made not him Daedalus, he made
That one burn me, who held him as his own.
But to the last of the ten moats, my shade
For alchemy that I performed up there,
With his unerring sentence, Minos bade."
Then I my Poet thus addressed: "Was e'er
People so foolish as are the Sanese?
They pass the French with a good deal to spare."
That other leper heard and quick to these
My words replied: "Thou hast not Stricca meant
Who only in careful spending found his ease.
Nor Niccolò who was the first to invent
Such a rich use for cloves within that cove
Where for that seed the soil is excellent.
Nor yet that band with whom his vines and grove
Caccia d'Ascian destroyed; their deeds to abet
With his good judgment Abbagliato strove.
So thou may'st know who seconds thy onset
'Gainst Siena's folks, fix thou in me thine eyes
And in my face their answer they shall get.
Thou shoudst in me Capocchio recognize
Who made false metals by his alchemy.
Thou shouldst recall, if right is my surmise,
That well enough was nature mocked by me."

Line 10—The moon was at its lowest point in the hemisphere under the feet of the poets: given the season, it was about midday in the world. They had till night to complete the journey through Hell.

27—An ancestor of Dante's, murdered by one of the Sacchetti family and still unrevenged.

28—Bertrand de Born, Viscount of Hautefort or Altaforte.

32—Anyone of his kin.

46—Malarian zones where many fell sick in summertime.

52—From the bridging crag down to the last bank or the inner bank of the tenth gulch.

59—Reference is made to a legendary plague which destroyed the population of Aegina, a small Greek island, as narrated by Ovid. Its reborn people were called Myrmidons or "ant-born".

74—Figure taken from the way earthen pot-covers were heated to be used then in baking some sort of cakes.

109—Griffolino, alchemist. Alberto of Siena, for whom he worked, accused him before the Bishop of Siena, his uncle, by whom he was regarded as his own son. Griffolino was burned for the practice of magic arts.

122—The Sanese nobles were famous for their wastefulness.

124—The second of the two who had been leaning on each other.

125—A gentleman from Siena, a spendthrift.

127—Niccolò de' Salimbeni who introduced a fashion of stuffing pheasants with cloves.

129—In Siena, where gluttony found a ready field.

130—A group of Sanese youths who became a by-word for their high living—while their money lasted. Caccia d'Asciano, one of them, had to sell his vineyards and olive groves to keep up with the crowd. He was helped in that by Abbagliato, another Sanese.

136—Capocchio, from Florence, whom Dante had known personally.

CANTO XXX

ARGUMENT

In the same tenth gulch the Poets meet other falsifiers; those who have represented falsely other persons, counterfeiters of coins, and falsifiers of words, or liars. Virgil sharply reproaches Dante for being interested in a wordy squabble between two of the last.

The time when Juno in such a rage was thrown
Through Semelé, against the Theban land—
As more than once she had already shown—
Athamas in his fury was so unmanned
That when he saw his wife who led her young
Holding a little one by either hand
He cried: "Let in their path our nets be flung
To catch the lioness and her offsprings."
Then with his claws, through madness fiercely strong,
He grasps the one Learchus called and swings
And smites his body upon a rock, while she
Into the waves herself and th'other flings—
And when by fate the Trojan vanity
That all seemed to defy was brought so low
And king and kingdom ceased at once to be—

Hecuba captive, in her heavy woe,
After she saw her Polyxena dead
And upon the seashore she came to know
(More pity!) Polydorus' body spread,
Out of her sense, to bark then she began,
So far astray by grief her mind was led.
Furies of Thebes or Troy yet at no one
With such a rage were ever seen to fly—
Not goading beasts, much less the flesh of man—
As two pale souls and nude who then my eye
Engaged: they run and bit and seemed to ape
A boar when being let out of the sty.
One reached Capocchio and with keen teeth the nape
Seized of his neck and dragging him along
On the hard bottom made his belly scrape.
The Aretin remained there, all unstrung,
And told me: "Gianni Schicchi is that foul sprite
Who madly lunging goes amidst the throng."
"Oh"—then I said—"may not the other bite
Thy flesh, reck not it hard to tell its name
Before away from here it takes to flight."
And he to me: "There mourns her ancient shame
Infamous Myrrha to her father bound
By love beyond what is natural claim.
To commit sin with him a way she found
By falsifying herself in other guise;
Even as that who pulls along the ground
To gain the herd's best mare, and at no price,
Buoso Donati dared to falsify
Making his will with norms of fair devise."

As the two maddened souls had passéd by
And my attention from their plight I shook
Some other wretch I set me to descry.

And one I saw, quite like a lute in look
If only he had his groins out off down where
To a human trunk the forkéd members hook.

Grave dropsy, causing body parts to pair
So badly—as awry the humors flow—
That face and belly no proportion bear,

Made him his widened lips reverse to throw,
One downward turned, the other upward curled—
Through raging thirst oft hectics hold them so.

"O you who are within this dismal world
Touched by no pain—and I know not the why—"
Such voice at us was from that sinner hurled—

"Consider Master Adam's misery:
I had the things of life much at my will,
Now for a drop of water vainly I cry.

Of those sweet brooks that from each verdant hill
Of Casentino down to Arno race,
Making their grassy channels moist and chill,

Always before my eyes the image stays
And all the limbs of me more fiercely it dries
Than this disease that keeps unfleshed my face.

That rigid justice which in me so pries
Draws from the place where sinfully I sojourned
Reason to make more sadly escape my sighs.

There is Romena where base dross I turned
To coins wherein the Baptist is impressed ,
For which up there I left my body burned.

Yet Guido's soul could I see here distressed
And Alexander's and their brother's, I
Would not lap Branda's spring with greater zest.
If the mad souls here roving do not lie
Already one is here: to what avail
Since this disease doth so my members tie?
Would that I were so light, while yet so frail,
That in a hundred years an inch I would move
Already I would have been upon the trail,
Seeking for him along this hideous groove
Though this eleven miles around must be
And half a mile in width at least would prove.
Through them I came to join this family;
They prompted me to coin the Florins where
The carats of base dross were at least three."
And I to him: "Who are that wretched pair
Crouching upon thy right in a close link
And steaming as wet hand in winter air?"
He answered: "When I ruined upon this brink
I found them there and, since, they stirréd not,
Nor will they for eternity, I think.
One the false charges against Joseph brought;
By her, that Greek from Troy, the false Sinon.
Sharp ague draws such stenches from their rot."
And one of them, perhaps aggrieved upon
So obscure a mention, dealt a smarting clout
Unto the other's belly tightly drawn
That sounded like a drum. Thereon the snout
Of his attacker Master Adam slapped
With arm that proved to be no bit less stout,

Saying meanwhile: "Though here I may look strapped
For all my members are so heavy and sick,
Yet to such work my arm is loose and apt."
Answered the other: "It was not so quick
When to burn on the pyre they carried thee,
But even quicker at thy coining trick."
The dropsical: "Thou speak'st now truthfully,
But truthful word by thee never was told
The time the Trojans made for truth a plea."
"If I false words, thou gavest away false gold"—
Sinon replied—"One crime alone I bear
Thou more than any fiend in this sad hold."
"Recall to mind the horse, thou perjurer"—
Answered the bloated one—"This be thy sting
That all the world is of that crime aware."
"Be thirst thy rue, for which thy tongue cracks through"—
Said then the Greek—"And all that putrid sap
That makes thy belly a hedge to thine own view."
The coiner then: "Again opens its gap
Thy mouth to words, as is its wont, awry;
For, if I thirst and have this bloated lap,
Thy head aches thee, thy body is parchéd dry
And but to leak Narcissus' mirror, thou
With few inviting words wouldst surely fly."
List'ning I stood with an attentive brow
When to me said the Master: "Now, just look,
I would for little with thee quarrel now."
His wrathful words quickly my conscience shook
And unto him with such a shame I turned
That mem'ry of it e'en now I hardly brook.

As, dreaming, one with danger is concerned
And dreaming wishes it were all a dream,
So that what is, as it were not, is yearned,
Such I was, while unspoken words did teem
Upon my lips. And better plea became
My silence than to me then it might seem.
My Master said: "Even a lesser shame
A greater fault would wash than thy delight;
Thus free thyself from any thought of blame.
Yet that I am with thee keep e'er in sight,
If at another time should chance require
Thy meeting people in such wordy fight:
Desire to hear such things is base desire."

Line 1—Semelè, mother of Bacchus, founder of Thebes, was loved by Jove and therefore hated by Juno, Jove's wife.

4—Athamas, king of Thebes, tried in his madness to catch Ino, his wife, and his two children, fancying them a lioness and her two cubs.

16—Hecuba, wife of Priam, king of Troy, mother of Polixena and Polydorus.

28—Mentioned in preceding canto.

31—Griffolino, mentioned as above.

37—The second sprite is Myrrha of whom speaks a Greek legend.

44—Upon the death of Buoso Donati, Simone, a distant relative, arranged to place Gianni Schicchi in the bed of the dead man and to impersonate him. Gianni, in the person of Buoso, dictated a will in favor of Simone. He also left to himself the best mare of the Donati stable.

49—So bloated that he would have looked like a lute, had his legs been cut off.

52—Humors of the body, not following their natural channel, cause the various parts to "pair" or to match each other badly, some being inflated beyond all proportions.

61, etc.—Master Adam, from Brescia. Was a famous counterfeiter: worked in the castle of Romena, in Casentine (Upper Arno). Discovered and burnt at the stake by Florentine authorities in 1281. The Florentines were very proud of their Florin—which bore the image of St. John the Baptist. Master Adam had been under the protection of Guido, Alessandro and Aghinolfo (the last not mentioned) Counts of Romena.

78—Probably Fontebranda, a famous fountain in Siena.

90—The Florin was composed of twenty-four carats of pure gold.

97—Potiphar's wife.

98—Sinon, feigning himself a Greek deserter, persuaded the Trojans to lead the wooden horse into their city.

123—Adam's bloated belly prevented his seeing beyond it.

128 Narcissus looked at himself in a clear pool.

143—Thy delight in that foul quarrel.

CANTO XXXI

ARGUMENT

Turning their back to the last gulch of the VIII Circle, the Poets proceed towards the center of the abyss and reach a great well along the edge of which the Giants are infixed. One of them lowers the travelers to the bottom of the pit.

The tongue by which so bitten I had been
That both my cheeks took on a reddened hue,
Afterwards offered healing medicine.
Thus I have heard Achilles' spear would do,
Or e'en his father's; on the opened wound
Would promptly a remedy from them issue.
We turned our back upon that woeful round
And walked across, without an uttered word,
The bank which of the valley forms the bound.
There night was not and yet the day was blurred,
And only a little went my eyes ahead,
But of a mighty horn the note I heard,
'Gainst which all thunders whispers might be said.
Straight toward its source but going contrary
Upon a single point my eyes were led.

After the rout which robbed of victory
King Charles and made his holy endeavor spent
Roland's great horn blew not so terribly.

Shortly had been my sight thereon intent
When many lofty towers I saw, methought,
And asked: "What city closes that enceinte?"

My Master answered me: "As thou hast sought
To pierce from too far off this darkish blur,
Thy fancy into this error has been brought.

When near that point, 'twill then to thee occur
How sense far from its object goes astray.
Do now thyself to faster walking spur."

Kindly his hand in mine he thereon lay
And said to me: "Ere further on we go,
Somewhat the strangeness of the fact to allay,

Giants not towers are those, as thou shalt know;
They line the bank around the well there dug
And from their navel down they are sunk below."

As when by sun or wind is cleared the fog
And by degrees the eyes come to construe
What hide the vapors which the welkin clog,

Thus that dark air and heavy piercing through,
As we approached the embankment more and more,
My fear grew stronger while my error flew.

In circling crown, like those high towers that soar
Upon Montereggioni's battlements,
Around the rim that tops that yawning bore

Loomed there with half their person's eminence
The horrid giants whom from heaven's height
Thundering Jove still threatens with offense.

One's visage came already within my sight,
Shoulders and breast, and of the belly a space,
And both his arms along the sides held tight.

Certainly Nature when she ceased to raise
Such animals did rightly to delete
Those ministers of Mars from our earth's face.

For if she is not repenting of her feat
With elephants and whales, whoe'er looks close
More righteous will see her and more discreet;

As where the argument of reason grows
Upon ill will and brawn—less mighty alone—
In no defense could men their trust repose.

His face in length and width seemed like the cone
That crowns in Rome Saint Peter's with its glare,
And on such scale was ev'ry other bone,

So that the bank, loin-cloth to him from where
The navel shows, so much left of his size
Above, that of arriving to his hair

Three Frieslanders would make a boast unwise;
For I could see of him thirty good hands
Down from the point where man his mantle ties.

"Rafél maì amech zabì"—at once
Such sounds were poured out of that mouth so fierce
That sweeter song it would not countenance.

"O foolish soul"—at him my Master sneers,
"Keep to thy horn and find in it thy vent
When wrath in thee or other passion rears.

Look 'round thy neck and find thine instrument
Belted thereon, and see, O soul confused,
How like a hoop o'er thy great breast 'tis bent."

And then to me: "By his own words accused
There Nimrod stands; he through whose evil plan
Comes that on earth more than one tongue is used.
Let us leave him and empty language ban;
For as he understands no other sound
Thus his own tongue can understand no man."
Still toward the left, a longer journey around
We made and, at an arrow's throw, arrived
Where one more fierce and larger limbed we found.
What master had his harness so contrived
Is past my telling, but his other wrist
In front, his right upon his back was gyved
By a chain that made around his neck a twist
And down on what of him stood out in sight
Turned on itself making a five-fold list.
My Master said: "This, boastful of his might,
Against the most high Jove a contest sought:
Him in such manner Justice doth requite.
His name Ephialtes and great deeds he wrought
When Gods, with fear, met Giants in a fray,
But now his arms will never solve that knot."
I then spoke to my Master: "If it may
Be done, on Briaraeus' monstrously
Constructed shape, my eyes I fain would lay."
"Nearby"—he said—"thou shalt Antaeus see:
Motion and speech he has and he shall ease
Us to the bottom of all reity.
The one thou seekst, quite far along this frieze
Is standing shackled. Save the fiercer cast
Of face, his mould is formed the same as these."

Never a tremblor or o stormy blast
Shook with such violence a lofty tower
As Ephialtes quickly shook his vast
Body. Then fear of death more made me cower
Than e'er before. The fear enough had been
Had I not trusted of those chains the power.
Many more steps we took 'round the ravine
And reached Antaeus who tops his rocky lair
Five ells and even more, down from his chin.
"Thou who within that fateful valley, where
Hannibal and his army at last gave way
And Scipio was made of lasting fame the heir,
A thousand lions gatheredst once as prey,
And who, hadst thou had part in that high war
Waged by thy brethren, some still haply would say
The Sons of Earth would then have won the score,
Lower us below—disdain not to do so—
Where are Cocytus' waters locked and hoar.
To Tityus or Tiphoeus make not us go.
This man can sooth of your desire the flame;
Turn not away thy snout but bend thee low.
Up in the world he shall refresh thy fame;
He lives and hopes his life will be long-spaced
If Grace betimes to itself him does not claim."
Thus spoke my Guide, and he with eager haste
To take my Master both his hands extended,
In whose great hold was Hercules embraced.
When Virgil felt himself thus apprehended
He gave me warning: "Come, that I take thee."
And in a bundle him and me he blended.

As Garisenda appears to those who see
Its sloping side beneath a cloud that goes
So that the tower seems leaning contrary,
Such seemed Antaeus to me, as I watched close
His bending: at that moment any stair
Except that one, in my own mind I chose.
But lightly on the depth where Lucifer
With Judas is engulfed, his cargo he placed.
Nor did he keep for long thus bending there
But like shipmast upright himself he raised.

Line 4—The father of Achilles was Peleus.

16—The rout of Charles' knights at Ronceval when Roland's horn vainly sounded a call to rescue, the King being dissuaded by the traitor Ganellone.

41—A castle near Siena.

45—Jove conquered the Giants by shooting lightnings at them.

59—A gilt bronze pine-cone of great size which was placed at the top of St. Peter's church as it existed in Dante's time.

64—Supposed to be very tall men.

65—A "hand" was a unit of measurement.

67—Meaningless words. Nimrod (line 77) had started the building of the tower of Babel.

98—Briaraeus was supposed to have a hundred arms.

115—The Bagrada valley where is Zama, famous for the great victory of Scipio Africanus over Hannibal. It was supposed to have been Antaeus' realm.

121—The Giants were the sons of the Earth.

124—Other Giants.

132—Antaeus had fought with Hercules, but had been conquered.

136—Garisenda, a leaning tower in Bologna.

CANTO XXXII

ARGUMENT

The Poets have now reached the IX Circle, of the traitors. It is a great lake of ice formed by the waters of Cocytus. The circle is divided in four, not very clearly indicated, sections: the "Caina" where are the traitors to their own blood, the "Antenora" with the traitors to their country of their party, the "Ptolomea" with the traitors to to their friends, and finally the "Giudecca" with the traitors to their benefactors.

If I had ryhmes of harsh and strident sound
As would be proper to that dismal bore
Which stands the thrust of all the rocks around,
I would the juice of my conception more
Fully press out, but that my tongue denies
And with some fear I come to sing my lore.
For it is not a jesting enterprise
Of all creation to describe the last
Depth, nor for tongue that "mama" and "papa" cries;
But help my verse, O Maids, who to the vast
Enclose of Thebes helped Amphion, and keep
My words so they may not with facts contrast.
Rabble worse fated than all in that deep
Who fill'st the place of which 'tis hard to tell:
Better if here you had been goats or sheep!
As we proceeded o'er the darkened well
Beneath the giant' feet, adown the plain
And I still gazed upon its rocky shell,

A voice I heard implore: "Thy steps contain;
Do so that with thy plants thou doest not tread
Upon the heads of brethren here in pain."

I turned then 'round and saw some space ahead
And underneath, a frozen basin lie
But glass, not ice, therein seemed to be spread.

Ne'er Danube's waters, in the winter, by
The Austrian shores, were held by veil so thick,
Nor yet the Don's, beneath that northern sky,

As those down there; if even Tabernich
Or Pietrapiana on them a power should hurl
For all that blow their edges would not creak.

As frogs that come to croak out of the swirl
And hold above the waters but their throat —
When oft of gleaning dreams the peasant girl—

Wearing, where shame would show, a livid coat
Those woeful souls were in the ice immured
And clacked their teeth in mock of a stork's note.

With head bent down their pain they thus endured;
Cold from their mouth and woe from the dim stare
Of their lowered eyes a certain proof procured.

After I had a while gazed here and there
I looked about my feet and two close pressed
To each other saw, whose heads confused their hair.

"Tell me, O you there standing breast to breast"—
I said—"Who are you two?"—Whereon they bent
Their necks and unto me their vision stressed.

Their tears within their eyes already pent
Dripped o'er their lids; thus many a frozen thread
Closed up their eyes and all their sight was spent.

Board upon board cannot be riveted
So tight; then as he-goats so butted they—
Such wrath in them flared up—head against head.

Another, both whose ears had lopped away
The frost, spoke up while still he did maintain
His eyes downcast: "Why such intent survey?

If wishest thou to know who are those twain,
The vale whence is Bisenzio's course inclined
Their father Albert's was and their domain.

Both from one womb, and yet thou shalt not find
Another shade in all Caina's crew
More worthy of being in this jelly brined.

Nor he whose body and shadow were broken through
By just a single blow from Arthur's spear,
Nor yet Focaccia or this whose head my view

So blocks that I see naught in front of here.
He Sassol Mascheroni was named; for sure
If Tuscan, thou must know of his career.

And that more questions I have not to endure
Know that the Camicion de' Pazzi was I:
Carlino I wait, whose sins shall mine obscure."

After, I saw a thousand faces awry
And purple with the cold; for that frore lake
I shudder now and will though time goes by.

And as our way unto that point we make
Whereto all that has weight must gravitate
While for that frosty air my limbs all shake,

I know not if by wish, or chance, or fate,
But walking 'mid those heads in many a row
Against one face my foot struck on right straight.

Weeping it chided me: "Why stamp me so?
If thou comest not to increase my punishment
For Mont'Aperti, why make worse my woe?"
Then I said: "Master, may thou not resent
A wait, while through this man I solve a doubt;
Then with whatever haste I'll be content."
My Guide stood still; I spoke, turning about,
To him who poured his curses and his wail:
"Who art who such abuse keepst splurting out?"
"And who art thou through Antenora's vale
Going, who smit'st our frozen cheeks? It were
Indeed too much, were I alive and hale."
I answered: "I still live and shouldst thou care
For thy renown above, it might please thee
If with the rest thy name I register."
And he to me: "I crave the contrary.
So trouble me no more and get thee away:
With this foul pond thy wiles do not agree."
Thereon my hand upon his scalp I lay,
Saying: "Indeed thou must thy name disclose,
Or not a hair upon thy head shall stay."
And he: "Shouldst thou my head all bare expose
I shall not tell my name nor yet consent
To show myself, for all thy hardest blows."
His hair I held in a strong grip distent
And had some tufts of it already pried
The while he barked and kept his stubborn bent.
"What ails thee, Bocca?"—then another cried—
"For clattering, thy jaws enough are loose,
Without thy barks. What fiend is at thy side?"

"Now for thy words"—I said—"I have no use,
Vile traitor, but to thine unending shame
I shall of thee bring to the world true news."
"Get gone, and all that pleases thee proclaim.
But if thou 'scapest from here, of him so adept
To wag his tongue, do not forget the name."—
He said—"Here the French bribe by him is wept.
I saw him from Duera—thou canst tell,
Down where the sinners' souls so cool are kept.
If questioned: there what other spirits dwell?
That fiend from Beccheria is at thy side,
Whose severed head in Florence' market fell.
Gian Soldanier thou reachest by one stride
Or two, and there by Ganellone's trap
Him who, Faenza asleep, her gate oped wide."
My Guide led on, 'tween us but a short gap;
Then in one hole two shades I saw—one held
His head upon the other's like a cap.
And as a man by hunger is impelled
To gnaw on bread, the one above kept pressed
His teeth where brain and nape together weld.
Tydeus, once, when wrath flamed in his breast
His teeth on Menalippus' temples set
As this that skull was gnawing and the rest.
"O thou who all manhood seem'st to forget
Gnawing thy partner with such bestial hate
Tell me the why you are so closely met.
If right thy grievance is against thy mate,
Knowing thy name and what has been his guilt
Up in the world I may thee compensate.
If this with which I'm speaking shall not wilt."

Line 9—The vulgar Italian, a young and yet untried language.
10—The Muses; they helped Amphien when by the sound of his lyre he made the stones move and built Thebes' walls.
15—Echo of Matt. XXVI, 24.
27—The Don is a Russian river.
28-29—Tabernich is a mountain in Sclavonia; Pietrapiana near Lucca.
38—Cold is indicated by their clattering teeth, woe from their eyes dimmed by tears.
44—They will be named by another sinner; see below.
55—They were Napoleon and Alexander, sons of Alberto degli Alberti. The family had various castles in the valley of the Bisenzio, a stream that enters the Arno a few miles below Florence. They killed each other.
59—This section is called "Caina", from Cain the first fratricide.
62—This was Sir Mordred, son of King Arthur, who betrayed his father and seized the throne in his absence. Returning, King Arthur slew him at one blow. A popular legend mentioned the piercing of his body and the sunrays passing through the wound.
63—Focaccia, of the Cancellieri, a White from Pistoia, said to have murdered his uncle and maimed his brother.
65—Of Florence: murdered a nephew of his.
68—From Florence: murdered a kinsman. But Carlino, of the same Pazzi family, was a worse scoundrel; he traitorously delivered a castle to the Florentines so that many exiles were seized and put to death.
81—The speaker is Bocca degli Abati, who at the battle of Mont'Aperti cut off the hand of the standard-bearer for the Florentines (his own people) who thereupon lost heart and were badly routed by the Sanese.
88—The Poets are now in the second section of the IX Circle called so from Antenor who is charged in some ancient story with having betrayed his city, Troy, by informing the Greeks.
112—Bocca, named by the other sinner, now reveals the other's name.
116—Guy of Monfort going toward Naples to help Charles of Anjou might have easily destroyed in passing the Appennine but Buoso da Duera who held the pass, let him slip through; for money, it was said.
119—Tesauro from Beccheria (place near Pavia) Abbot of Vallombrosa and Papal Legate to Florence. Was accused of betraying the Guelphs of the city and publicly executed.
121—A Ghibelline, from Florence, traitor to his party.
122—Gano or Ganellone. See Inf. XXXI, 16-18. Kept Charlemagne from going to Roland's rescue.
123—Tebaldello de' Zambasi of Faenza, a city between Tuscany and Romagna. For a private vengeance, he opened at night a gate of his city to the besieging Bolognese.
130—Tydeus and Menalippus wounded mortally each other at the siege of Thebes. Tydeus asked for the enemy's head and while dying, savagely bit on it.

CANTO XXXIII

ARGUMENT

The Poets are at the boundary between the section of the IX Circle called Antenora and that called Ptolomea. The sinner questioned by Dante at the end of the preceding Canto is now going to speak. After he has told his tale, the Poets proceed and view some other traitors.

His mouth uplifted from his fierce repast
That sinner, cleansing it upon the hair
Back of the skull his teeth had held so fast.
Then he began: " 'Twill freshen the despair
That chokes my heart if thy request I heed
And speak what in my thoughts hardly I can bear.
But if my words are to become a seed,
For this traitor I gnaw, fruitful of shame,
See how my words with bitter tears I knead.
I know not of thy country, nor thy name,
Nor how thou camest down here, but Florentine,
If right I hear, thy speech would thee proclaim.
Know that Count Ugolino I have been;
Ruggeri this, the Archbishop; I'll tell now
Why upon him so neighborly I lean.

How through his plots I was betrayed and how,
Prison and death were by his guile my fate,
That to recount to thee useless I trow.

But what the common tale cannot relate,
That is, how cruelly was my death brought on,
Hear now, and know if he deserves my hate.

A small aperture in the dungeon, known
After my death as "Hunger's Tower"—and there
Others are yet in durance to be thrown—

Already had to me disclosed the glare
Of many a moon, when came the dream to me
That of the future did the curtain tear.

This man was chief and master, eagerly
Chasing the wolf and his cubs up the hill
For which the Pisan cannot Lucca see.

With lean and hungry hounds well trained to kill
Gualandi he pushed, Sismondi, and th' other fiend
Lanfranchi, all going forward at his will.

After brief course semed to have lost their wind
Parent and young—their flanks with blood were red
As upon them the hounds their fangs had pinned.

I woke that morn long ere the night had fled
And heard my children cry while yet asleep—
My children there with me—and ask for bread.

Heartless art thou if stirréd to the deep
Art not, surmising what my mind discerned;
If this cannot, what else can make thee weep?

They woke; soon came the hour when we had learned
To look for scanty food: each of us struck
By a warning dream felt hope to doubting turned.

And then I heard below clinched on the lock
Of that horrendous tower, and silently
I scanned the faces of my little flock.
I could not cry: a stone I seemed to be;
But they did weep, and my sweet Anselm cried:
"Father, so strange thou look'st, what troubles thee?"
But I held back my tears, nor yet replied
All of that day and while the night went past
And on the world again the sun did glide.
Then, as a bit of light illumed at last
The gloom of that sad dungeon and I saw
Four faces with my own dismay aghast,
Despair made me on both my hands to gnaw.
And they, suspecting it was through distress
Of hunger, stood up quickly from their straw
And said: "Oh, father, it will grieve us less
Shouldst thou eat of this body we owe to thee;
Thou gavest it us, take thou this fleshy dress."
Then, for their sake, I bore more valiantly.
One day, another, passed in silent spell:
Ah! thou hard earth, hadst thou then yawned for me!
Now the fourth day, has crept within our cell
And stretchéd at my feet my Gaddo prays:
"Father, why helpst me not?"—and there he fell.
There Gaddo died, and as thou see'st my face,
I saw them fall exhausted one by one,
The fifth and the sixth day, in death's embrace.
Blinded and mad I groped o'er all my own,
Calling them for three days, while they were dead.
Then starving did what sorrow had not done."

With turbid eyes, after this much he said,
He made that sorry skull again his game
Crunching the bones as would a dog unfed.
Alas, thou Pisa, thou reproach and shame
Of that fair land where "si" is heard to sound,
As to the vengeance are thy neighbors lame,
Let Capraia and Gorgona shift their ground
And build a wall at Arno's mouth across
So that each living soul in thee be drowned.
For e'en hadst thou indeed suffered a loss
Of some strongholds through Ugolino's wrong
Thou shouldst not have his sons put on that cross.
Thou newer Thebes, guilt could not reach the young
Brigata and Uguccione and the twain
Whose names above are mentioned in this song.
We passed beyond, to where the deep moraine
Binds up another tribe in its hard mold,
And here the shades wholly on their back are lain.
Their very tears the boon of tears withhold
As their grief through their eyes cannot be freed
And inwards turns, causing a pain twofold.
For the first tears clot hard and seem to be
A crystal mask that fills and overlays,
Beneath the brows, the socket cavity.
And though I felt that—as on callous place,
Every feeling, through the bitter frost,
Had lost its wonted hold upon my face,
Still then a wind, methought, my forehead crossed,
So that I said: "What moves this air, my Lord?
I thought all vapors here their power had lost."

"Soon thou shalt be"—such was to me his word—
"Where thine own sight will give thee answer true,
Seeing the source from which this breath is poured."
Then from that sorry frost-encrusted crew
Shouted a wretch: "O ye spirits so fell
That the last place in Hell is given you,
These hardened veils before my eyes dispel
That I may vent the woe that wrings my heart
A while at least, till tears turn to a hard shell."
And I to him: "Reveal then who thou art
If help thou crav'st; should I thy scales not break,
May I reach of this ice the lowest part."
"Friar Alberigo I am"—up then he spake—
"He of the fruits in evil garden grown,
And for my figs these dates here back I take."
"What"—said I—"to thy death already gone?"
He answered: "How my body is now engaged
Up in the world, to me is wholly unknown.
This Ptolomea is thus privileged
That oft, even before Atropos' thrust,
A soul may ruin to be here encaged.
And that more willing thou mayest shave the crust
Made by these glassy tears upon my face,
Know that soon as a soul betrays its trust,
As I did, in its body it must give place
To a fiend that governs henceforth its career
Until its life has run the given space.
The soul is plunged into this cistern here
And still above perhaps the body all see
Of that foul shade that winters at my rear.

Thou must know that, coming but recently:
Sir Branca d'Oria is he, and many a sun
Has turned, since thus encased he is with me."
"I think"—said I—"thou art a lying man,
For D'Oria has not yet paid death his toll
And eats and drinks and sleeps and clothes puts on."
"Up there"—he said—"in Malebranche's bowl
By thick and seething pitch all overspread,
Not yet arrived had Michel Zanche's soul
When this man left to a demon in his stead
His body, as did that other of his breed
Whose hands through the same treason colored red.
But now stretch forth thy hand that I be freed
And ope my eyes." That I refused to do,
And villainy to him was courtly deed.
Alas, ye Genoese, ye men untrue
To comon customs, who in all sins abound,
Why is the world not rid of all of you?
For with Romagna's foulest soul I found
Such one of you who through his vile offense
Is now, in spirit, in Cocytus drowned
The while, above, his flesh to life pretends.

Line 13—Conte Ugolino della Gherardesca, for a time Podestà of Pisa. Archbishop Ruggeri was among his supporters until Ugolino murdered the Archbishop's nephew; then he turned against him. Ugolino's death happened in 1288.

18—Florence being not far from Pisa, Dante must have known in general of the Count's death.

30—There is a high hill between the cities of Pisa and Lucca.

32—Sismondi, Gualandi, Lanfranchi were some of the nobles of Pisa who joined the Archbishop in the revolt against Ugolino.

38—Gaddo and Uguccione were Ugolino's own sons; Brigata and Anselmo his grandsons.

75—It is not supposed that Ugolino fed on the dead bodies of the children: the line means Ugolino died of starvation.

80—This was a common expression to designate a country: The land of "si" (yes) was Italy. There is still a French province called "Langue d'oc."

83—Capraia and Gorgona are two small islands at the mouth of the river Arno which crosses Pisa not far from the sea.

88—Pisa is called "Newer Thebes" because that city was famous in antiquity for its cruelties.

92—This is the Ptolomea section, so-called probably from Ptolomeus, of whom in *I Maccabee, XVI*, 11, who slew Simon, the High Priest, and two sons of his while they were his guest.

105—Winds are caused by heated air—vapors—raised by the heat of the sun; they were not expected therefore in that depth of Hell.

108—Dante will soon observe how the wind in Cocytus is caused by the flapping of Lucifer's wings.

110—Dante and Virgil are mistaken for condemned souls.

117—Dante uses a "mental restriction": he truly intended to reach the lowest part of that ice, though not in the way the spirit supposed.

118—Alberigo de' Manfredi, Seigneur of Faenza, in Romagna. Calls himself "Friar" because in his old age a friar of the so-called "Jovial Friars". He had invited some of his relatives to a banquet and given orders to his men-at-arms that upon the fruits being brought in they should invade the banquet hall and slay his guests.

124—"Privilege" is evidently said in irony.

125—Atropos is one of the Parcae presiding over the duration of man's life. The phrase means: "before actual death".

137—Of the powerful D'Oria family of Genoa. Slew at a banquet his father-in-law, Michael Zanche.

151—Dante was badly received at Genoa by the D'Oria. Besides, the city had gone over to the Guelph party and fought the Ghibellins, Dante's party.

CANTO XXXIV

ARGUMENT

In the last section of Circle IX, the traitors are completely immersed in ice. The monstrous shape of Lucifer is seen in the distance, infixed at the center of the earth. Climbing on his shaggy flank the Poets emerge on the other side of Hell and finally to the surface of the earth.

"And now the King of Hell his banners grim
Displays in front of us"—my Master said—
"So look and see what canst discern of him."
As when thick fog throughout the air is spread
Or evening dusk obscures our hemisphere,
Shows from afar a mill by high wind sped,
Such structure there I saw ahead appear—
Methought—then for the heavy wind I drew
Back of my Guide, the only shelter near.
With fear I set to ryhmes what struck my view
There, where all covered was each reprobate
But showing as in glass a straw shows through.
Some shades were lying, some were standing straight,
Here on their soles, with head stuck downward yon,
Some—face to feet—in posture arcuate.

As o'er enough of distance we had gone
When proper thought my Master that I see
The creature that for beauty once has shone,
He stepped aside and beckoning to me
To stay, he said: "Here Dis now and the place
Where of strong will thou need'st the armory."
How I was frozen into voiceless daze
Ask not, O reader; this I cannot write
On parchment, as too weak would be my phrase.
I did not die and yet I was not quite
Alive; think, if I was not that nor this
What I became, if hast of sense a mite.
The ruler of the desolate abyss
Stood up with half his bust out of the ice
And to a giant's form mine closer is
Than of his arms the giants match the size.
How monstrous is that whole, thou canst now know,
That in proportion, must such parts comprise.
If beauty once as foulness now did show
In him, and on his Maker if he frowned,
Certes from him must ev'ry evil flow.
Ah! how I felt myself by wonder bound
When in his head three faces I descried!
One showed in front and red was all around;
This joined two others, one on either side,
Midway each shoulder: at their upper ends
All the three faces joined and unified.
On the right one, white hue with yellow blends;
The left one in its color mocks the race
From where the Nile down to the plain descends.

Two mighty wings were set beneath each face
Such as the vastness of that bird would fit:
Never I saw on ship sails of that space.
They were not plumed but like a bat's were knit;
The monster shaking them, like a great fan,
Sent out a triple wind across the pit.
Hence locked in frost was all Cocytus's span.
He wept, and through six eyes tears found a vent
And down three chins a foam blood-crimsoned ran.
In ev'ry mouth he crunched with violent
Grinding of teeth a sinner—crusher-wise—
And thus to three of them gave punishment.
To that in front that ever tight'ning vise
But little means; the fiends uproots his hide
So that all bare of it his back oft lies.
"That soul up there who is most sorely tried
Is Judas"—spoke to me my Master so.
"With head within, he shakes his legs outside.
Of th' other two who have their head below
Brutus is hanging 'neath the blackish snout.
See how he squirms but utters not his woe.
Cassius the other, looming there so stout.
But now again is coming up the night.
Having seen all, our way from here leads out."
At his desire, his neck I claspéd tight,
And he, who watched of time and place the chance,
When opened were the wings at proper height
Held fast the hairy sides with both his hands.
Then downward moved, passing from ply to ply
Twixt the thick fur and the frost-bound expanse.

When we had come below, to where the thigh
Is on the haunches' thickness pivoted,
With breath hard-drawn and struggling painfully
My Leader did invert his legs and head.
Then as a man who ascends he grasped that hair
Going toward Hell again, I thought with dread.
"Hold on quite fast, for only by this stair"—
My Master spoke, breathing as man forspent—
"We can depart from all the evil there."
Then he came out above a rocky rent
And on its rim for me he found a seat,
Cautiously making after me the ascent.
I lifted up my eyes and thought to meet
Lucifer's body as I had it just left,
But now I saw that he held up his feet.
If I became of all clear thought bereft
Let the gross gentry think, into whose ken
Comes not the point we passed along that cleft.
"Up on thy feet"—to me the Master then—
"Long is the way and hard indeed the road,
While to mid-tierce the sun returns again."
It was no hall within a princely abode
Where we were now, but shaft of nature's make
With soil unsteady and light that hardly glowed.
"Ere this abyss for ever I forsake,
Master of mine"—I said, when standing straight—
"Speak and my mind out of its errors take.
Where is the ice? In such inverted state
Why is he stuck? And why in such brief course
From eve to morning did the sun rotate?"

And he: "'Gainst truth in thee the fancy wars
That thou art still this side of center, where
I gripped the furry worm that the world bores.
While I was climbing down so placed we were,
But when I turned, that point we left behind
On which from ev'ry side all objects bear.
Now in that hemisphere ourselves we find
Opposed to that over the dry-land vast
And 'neath whose summit was to death consigned
He on whose birth and life no shadow was cast
Of sin. Thou standest on that little sphere
That doth Giudecca on this side contrast.
When eve is there, this side the day grows clear.
He who gave us as stair his hairy flank
Is now, as he first was, infixéd here.
From the high heaven on this side he sank.
For fear of him the land that here stood dry
As 'neath a veil, below the ocean shrank,
Coming to our horizon: and to fly
From him, perhaps, left here an empty space
That which appears this side, and looms up high."
Away from Belzebub there is a place
Whose spread for all of that tomb's length extends
And that by sight alone one cannot trace
But for a purling brook that there descends
Through a hollowed rock in which a rut has worn
Its own wide-winding course that slightly bends.
The Guide and I then entered that forlorn
Pathway to reach again the clear sunshine,
And all desire of rest we held in scorn.

He first, I second, moved along the incline
Until through a small aperture came to view
Some of the beauteous things the heavens shrine:
Then we came forth to see the stars anew.

Line 1—In the original this first line is in Latin, a paraphrase of a church hymn in praise of the cross: *Vexilla regis prodeunt.*

20—Dis, or Lucifer.

38, etc.—The three faces of Lucifer probably represent the three parts of the world then known, from which came his subjects: the one in front is red, for the European race; the right one white and yellow, for the Asiatics; the left one black (as that of the Aethiopians) for the Africans.

65—Brutus and Cassius, the conspirators against Caesar and traitors to the Imperial idea, Dante's political fetish. Brutus is still silently stoical.

68—It was the evening of Good Saturday on earth.

93—The center of the earth.

96—While it was night on the other hemisphere, that over the inhabited earth, as now the Poets are in an opposite position, the sun has risen on their present hemisphere. Mid-tierce is the middle of the first of the four divisions of the day, according to medieval custom.

112—We are in the hemisphere opposed to that over the earth—called "dry land vast" by a Scriptural locution "terra arida": Jerusalem, where the innocent Christ was put to death is beneath the highest point of that hemisphere.

121, etc—At the fall of Lucifer the land on "this side" shrank below the ocean and pushed the earth's mass except that part which rose above the water (126) to form the Mount of Purgatory, which stands out opposite to Jerusalem.

CANTO II

DANTE'S PURGATORIO

A Lineal and Rhymed Translation by

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PREFACE

IF WE consider what passion is dominant in each of the three realms of the Dantean Otherworld, we may say that Hell is the realm of Hatred; Purgatory, of Desire; Paradise, of Love. Desire, in Purgatory is both the source of suffering—because temporarily thwarted—and the source of rejoicing, because based on a hope of certain fulfilment. And the Poet now looks with other eyes on those whom he recognizes truly as fellow-creatures, having borne the same burden as he is carrying, and whose burden he, too, shall carry some day.

Thus Purgatory has a very different atmosphere than Hell; it is a world of sunlight and music and friendly embraces. The Love of country, which Dante could not quite suppress even in Hell, finds here long and passionate expressions. I suggest to the reader a comparison between Purg. II and Inf. III, the arrival of the Angelic boat to the shores of the sacred Mountain and the crossing of Acheron on Caron's boat, for a vivid insight of the antithesis of the two realms; an antithesis which is carried through all the Cantos.

But I cannot here develop any suggestion for the aesthetic enjoyment of the Poem, much less any theory of interpretation. The Notes which follow each Canto will be found sufficient for a literal understanding of the text; for the inner meaning of the Poem, critical works will have to be consulted.

The illustrations used in this volume are by contemporary Italian artists.

ALBERT R. BANDINI

Cotati, California, 1930

CANTO I

ARGUMENT

The poets emerge from Hell on the island Mountain of Purgatory. They are met by the Guardian of the place, Cato, who directs them to the shore for a rite of purification.

To run o'er better waves, its daring sail
My genius' little bark lifts at this time,
Having such cruel sea left in its trail.
And of that second realm shall sing my rhyme
Where from its dross man's spirit waxes free
And is made worthy heavenward to climb.
Let here be roused death-shrouded poesy,
O hallowed Muses—to whose service bound
I am—and somewhat rise Calliope
Seconding this my song with such a sound
As when the unhappy Picae felt the dire
Blow which their hopes of pardon did confound.
Sweet hue of oriental bright sapphire
Which was embosomed in th' expanse serene
Of gem-pure air, up to the primal gyre,

Gave me new taste of joy with its clear sheen
Soon as I 'scaped of that dead air the blight
Which on my eyes and breast so hard had been.
The beauteous star whose rays our love excite
Bespread her smile o'er all the Orient—
The trailing Pisces waning in her light.
I turned me to the right and while intent
To th' other pole, saw those four stars that were
Only to the first people evident.
The heavens seemed rejoicing at their glare;
O northern region, left in widowed state
Since of their brilliance thou art unaware!
As with their glow became my sight satiate
I somewhat turned unto the other zone—
(The Chariot had now gone through that gate)
And saw near me an agéd man alone
Whose aspect did such reverence command
More than a father merits from his own.
Long beard and mixed with many a snowy strand
He wore and—equal hued—his hair upon
His breast was falling in a double band.
From those four holy stars whose splendor shone
On him, such radiance his aspect took
That him I saw as if he faced the sun.
"—Who are ye two who 'gainst the sightless brook
Have 'scaped the fetters of th' eternal jail?"—
He said, the while his honored plumes he shook.
"—Who guided you and who has lit your trail
Issuing out of the deep night whose shroud
Makes black forever that infernal vale?

CANTO I

Wherefore the laws of Hell have been so bowed?
Or have the Heavens changed to new decree
That you, though damned, are to my caves allowed?"—
Then, after taking a firm hold of me,
With hands and words and signs did so my Guide
That reverently I bent my eye and knee.
"—I came not of myself"—he then replied—
"A woman stooped from Heav'n, at whose appeal
I help and lead this man here at my side.
But if it is thy will that we reveal
Our full condition, in a manner true,
Certes cannot be mine aught to conceal.
Not yet this man his final evening knew
But through his folly there so close he went
That in brief course of time his end was due.
As I have said, to him I have been sent
To rescue him, and through this path alone
He can be saved, on which I am intent.
The sinful souls to him all have been shown
And now to show to him those shades I seek
Who here, kept in thy charge, their guilt atone.
'Twere long to tell his rescue from the bleak
Prison: a power from high my strength sustains
To lead him to see thee, to hear thee speak.
I trust his coming here thy favor gains;
Freedom he seeks, the dearest boon of all
As well he knows who for it life disdains.
Thou know'st; death for its sake no bitter gall
Once held in Utica, where thy robe lies
Which shall resplend so bright at the last call.

No law eterne his coming here defies,
For he still lives, nor Minos fetters me.
The place where are thy Marcia's chaste eyes
Is mine, and still her yearning look I see,
O hallowed breast, that thou may'st still hold her
As thine; for love of her accept our plea.
Across thy seven kingdoms let us fare;
My praise of thee to her shall not be scant
If mention of thy name thou shunn'st not there."—
"—So Marcia did my loving eyes enchant"—
Said he—"while in the world I lived of yore,
Whatever grace she asked I fain would grant;
But now she dwells beyond that evil shore,
And for that law which was proclaimed when I
Was drawn from there, she may move me no more.
But since thou say'st a Woman from the high
Heaven moves thee, thou hast of naught else need
But her request, and vain is flattery.
Go then and see that with clear-stemméd reed
Thou gird this man, and that thou lave his face
So that of all its stains it may be freed;
It were not right with eyes that bear the trace
Of blackish fog, to meet the Minister
First here on guard, who is of heav'nly race.
Along the margin of this islet, where
Yonder below 'tis by the billows flayed
Doth the soft loam many such rushes bear.
No plant which would produce a leafy blade,
Or hardened grow, may there maintain its root
As it yields not when by the pounding swayed.

Return by other path to your pursuit;
Follow the sun which makes the East now bright—
'Twill show where easier may climb your foot."—
He vanished then, and I drew me upright
Speaking no word, my body closely pressed
Against my Guide, and fixed on him my sight.
"—Follow my steps, my son—" I was addressed
By him—"Let us turn back, as hence the land
Slopes toward its lowest marge which is our quest."—
Now 'gainst the dawn the dusk could not withstand
But fled in front; afar I could obtain
A glimpse of sparkling ripples by the strand.
We went across the solitary plain
As man who back to his lost road must go
And till he gains it, thinks he walks in vain.
When we reached where the dew strives with its foe—
The sun—in part wherein the shades afford
A cover and its solving is but slow,
Both hands outspread upon the grassy sward
With gentle pressure did the Master place,
And I, wise to his art, of one accord
Then offered to his touch my tear-stained face,
And he uncovered there the pristine hue
Of which the fog of Hell had hid all trace.
After, to the deserted shore we drew
Which on its waves ne'er saw a man unfold
A sail, who the back course might then pursue.
Here I was girdled as we had been told;
A wondrous thing to tell! The humble shoot
Alike in all to that which he had polled
Suddenly grew again from its same root.

Line 9, etc.—Calliope is the Muse of heroic song. The Picae, or Pierides (daughters of Pierus) challenged the Muses and, vanquished, were changed into magpies.

15—To the First Circle, or Lowest Movable Heaven: The atmosphere of the Earth reaches that high. As to Dante's cosmology, see Par. Canto I.

19—Venus was shining; the constellation of the Fishes was waning.

22—Adam and Eve from their place in the Terrestrial Paradise (see Purg. XXVIII) could see the stars of the Southern Cross. But possibly these stars are only meant as symbols of the Four Cardinal Virtues.

29-30—To the North Pole where the Chariot (Ursa Major) had disappeared.

31—Cato of Utica, heroic upholder of Roman Liberty. Preferred death to submission to Pompeus.

40—The stream which the poets had followed—against current—coming out of Hell.

78—Cato's wife.

82—The seven circles of Purgatory, corresponding to the seven capital sins.

89—Once Cato was drawn from Limbo (see Inf. IV) no intercourse was possible.

94—A symbol of humility.

131—No man could navigate to the Purgatory shores—Ulysses had tried and failed (see Inf. XXVI).

CANTO II

ARGUMENT

In the advancing dawn appears a boat, guided by an Angel, on which the souls come to their purification. Among the new-comers Dante meets an old friend. The meeting is interrupted by Cato.

Now that horizon touched the Sun's ascent
'Neath whose meridian's most lofty height
Stands of Jerusalem the holy enceinte.
And in her counter-circle rose the night
From Ganges—in her hands the Scales held fast
Which she lets drop when she exceeds daylight.
Thus—where I was—the white and ruddy cast
Of beautiful Aurora's cheeks obtained
That orange shade which shows her freshness past.
Still alongside the sea we two remained
Like people who their way are thinking o'er—
Their heart is eager but their feet seem chained.
When lo! as Mars at dawn is wont to soar—
A reddish glare through the thick vapors' haze—
Down toward the West, above the ocean floor,

Such then I saw—would that again my gaze
Could feast on it—a light upon the brine
Coming so fast, no wing with it could race.

After I did from it a while decline
My eyes, to pose a question to my Guide,
Brighter and larger yet it seemed to shine.

Then something white appeared from every side
Of it—I knew not what—and some such thing
Sprouting from under it I also espied.

My Master from all speaking did forbear
Till the first white as wings appeared; then he,
Having well recognized the mariner,

—"Make haste—" exclaimed—"make haste to bend thy knee.
Behold God's Angel coming; fold thy hands:
To see such officers 'tis now gi'en thee.

See how his course no human means demands;
No oar he wants, no sail helps him to fly
But his own wings, between these distant strands.

See how their tips point to the heaven high,
Beating the air with those eternal plumes
Which not like human hairs may moult or die."

Closer and closer yet before us looms
The heavenly Bird—and now from him must shrink
My eyes and bend to earth, such light illumes

His aspect, as he nears the sandy brink
On a fast bark of such a lightsome swoop
That in the waters naught of it may sink.

Stood the celestial pilot on the poop
And God-sealed bliss upon his semblance shone:
More than a hundred shades sat in the sloop.

CANTO II

IN EXITU ISRAEL, in unison
Did all the shades their chanting voices lift,
With all that of that psalm then follows on.

After, he made on them the sign of shrift;
Whereon they all threw them upon the shore
And, as he had arrived, he vanished swift.

The crowd who were left there a semblance bore
As if bewildered at the place; about
Looked all, like men who novel things explore.

His shining darts of light the Sun shot out
From every side, and their true aim had now
From middle heaven put the Goat to rout,

When the newcomers lifting up their brow
In our direction spoke: "Show us the way
To reach the mountainside, should ye know how."

"Perchance you think—" was prompt my Guide to say—
"That we possess some knowledge of this place,
But we, as you, are strangers and astray.

We came ahead of you but a short space
By other path which was so hard to hew,
Henceforth a play shall be this climb to face."

The spirits noting from the breath I drew
That I still wore a mortal's fleshy dress
Seized by great wonder death-like pallid grew.

As people draw to hear, with eagerness,
The news from olive bearing messenger,
And no one minds the jostling and the press,

Thus did intently upon my semblance stare
All of those spirits whom the Heavens claim,
And loath they seemed to go and make them fair.

And one of them I saw who forward came
In act of greeting which such love expressed
That it moved me toward him to do the same.
O shades whose aspects but vain fabric vest!
Three times around its back I clasped my hands,
Three times I folded them upon my breast.
Wonder, methinks, o'erspread my countenance,
Whence with a smile drew back from me the shade
While after him I kept on my advance.
At his kind-spoken bidding then I stayed
And as his truthful self to me shewed clear
For him to pause and speak to me I prayed.
"As in the flesh"—said he—"I held thee dear,
Thus I love thee from earthly bonds untied.
Therefore I pause, but why thy journey here?"
—"Casella of mine, I shall"—thus I replied—
"Return to where I am, this journey o'er,
But why this land to thee so long denied?"
And he: "No outrage done by him may I deplore
Who taking when and whom to him may please
Has more than once left me on yonder shore,
Since his own will with a just will agrees.
But for the last three months all souls have been
Taken, who willed to come, in perfect peace.
Whence I who now had turned to the marine
Where Tiber's stream takes on a salty sting
Benignantly by him was gathered in.
Straight to that river's mouth now points his wing,
As all who 'scape the fall to Acheron
Must to those shores, until his choosing, cling."

And I: "If a new law has not undone
Thy memory and thy art for love's sweet song
With which all my desires their peace oft won,
Comfort a while with thy harmonious tongue
My soul which of its body not yet free
So weary is now from the road hard and long."—
"Love which discourses in my mind with me"—
In such sweet strain he answered my request
That still within I hear that melody.
And now my Master, I, and all the rest
Who were with him seemed to be so content
As if our mind therefrom naught else could wrest.
While all our wit upon his notes was bent
Behold the grave old man appeared and cried:
"Ye laggard souls, is thus your time ill spent?
Why this neglect, why here so idly bide?
Hasten to yonder mount, those scales to shed
Which to your eyes, as yet, God's vision hide."
As when the pigeons at their pasture spread
Quietly busy picking grain or tares
(Against their use, they droop their prideful head)
If thing appears to them that danger bears
All of a sudden they forego their feed
Because they are assailed by greater cares;
Thus that new troop I saw, who, taking heed,
Left off the song and to the mountain raced
As men not knowing where their steps may lead.
And our departure was no less in haste.

Line 1, etc.—As indicated in INF. XXXIV, the mountain of Purgatory is antipodal to the hill of Jerusalem: the same meridian crosses them, so that the sun, setting in respect to Jerusalem, rises in respect to the Purgatory mountain. The river Ganges was supposed to be at the eastern limit of the Jerusalem horizon.

5—The constellation of the Scales, or Libra. In the season when night exceeds day light (is longer than the day) the Libra is not in view.

8—Aurora, the Dawn. It grows orange-colored as it advances.

33—From the Tiber's mouth to Purgatory. The souls passing from mortal life in the grace of God, are held there until taken away by the Angel.

46—The psalm celebrating the liberation of Israel from Egypt.

57—The constellation of Capricorn: two hours of daylight had passed.

71—A messenger of peace.

91—Musician and singer from Florence.

94, etc.—The souls are detained on the Tiber shore according to their delay in conversion. But from the beginning of the Jubilee proclaimed by Bonifacius VIII for the year 1300 (three months of that year had now passed) all souls were allowed on the boat.

97—The Angel who takes souls on his boat acts according to God's will.

112—First line of a song in Dante's "Convito".

119—Cato.

CANTO III

ARGUMENT

The poets reach the steep side of the mountain, wondering where they may find a path upward. They meet a band of spirits and one of them speaks to Dante. This is the Anti-Purgatory, a part with which the Poem deals as far as Canto X.

While in that flight so sudden, every soul
Through the champaign had scattered, far and wide,
Having the mount, where reason probes, for goal,
I huddled close unto my trusty Guide.
And how, without his help, direct my course?
Who would have led my steps up the hillside?
He seemed, of his own self, gnawed by remorse;
O noble conscience, undefiled and true
How e'en small fault smites thee with bitter force!
And when his feet left off that haste undue
Which all the acts of man seems to divest
Of dignity, my mind wide-watchful grew—
From its restricted scope—in eager quest.
And over toward that hill I drew my face
Which heavenward from earth mounts loftiest.

The ruddy sun was at my rear ablaze
But by my form, in front, a break was made
As it opposed a wall against his rays.

I turned me to my side, as if afraid
That I was left alone, when I descried
Only from me upon the soil a shade.

My Comforter: "Dost thou not yet confide?"—
He spoke, and fully turned on me his eyes:
—"Doubt'st thou my standing by, thy steadfast guide?

The evening dusk has now began to rise
Where is the body whence a shadow I cast:
At Naples, from Brundusium moved, it lies.

If through my body now the light goes past
No more should'st wonder thou than at a sphere
Which to the light does not a pass contrast.

To suffer heats and colds and more severe
Torments such bodies has a virtue arrayed;
But how 'tis done, to us cannot be clear.

Mad is who hopes to grasp with reason's aid
Creation's plan where its infinitude
One Substance in three Persons has displayed.

The "quia", O mortals, must your search conclude.
Could you have seen of things the mode entire
There was no need of Mary's motherhood.

And you have seen with fruitless zeal enquire
Such men who would have quieted their quest,
But timeless woe now grows from their desire.

Of Plato and Aristotle and the rest
I speak, by this—" and here his brow he bent
And spoke no more, and seemed by thoughts oppressed.

The bottom we had reached of that ascent
Meantime, and found the rock had such sheer fall
That there our legs would have vain efforts spent.
'Twixt Lerici and Turbia the path, of all
The loneliest and steepest, were a stair
Quite tame and easy stepped, beside that wall.
"Who knows which side the coast slopes easier?—
—My Master said, and took no further pace—
"That he who has no wings may climb up there?"—
And while he stood and earthward bent his face
Pondering in his mind which way to go
Upwards, around the rock, I turned my gaze.
Just then from the left hand began to show
A band of souls who moved toward us their feet—
(Thus barely it seemed, as they came on so slow)
"Master, lift up thy eyes—" I did entreat—
"Some who may counsel us come from this side
If thou can'st not, thyself, this problem meet."
He looked at me and with frank mien replied:
—"As they proceed so slow, let us go there;
And thou, sweet son, firm in thy hope abide."
So far from us, as yet, those people were—
(After a thousand steps of ours, I say)—
As for good hurler would be distance fair,
When all they stopped, in crowded, still array,
Against the rocks which had our climbing checked,
As one who doubts and to explore would stay.
"O happy dead, O souls already elect"—
Virgil began to speak: "Pray, for that peace
Which certes all of you may justly expect,

Where doth the steepness of the mount decrease
Tell us, that we may climb: he that most knows
Regrets the most the time which useless flees."
As do the sheep forth coming from their close
By one, or twos, or threes: the rest stand there
Bending their eyes and head in timid pose:
Whate'er the first will do, they follow her;
If still she stands, they huddle by her side—
Simple and quiet; nor for the why they care—
I saw thus move, as if toward us to stride
The foremost rank of that now happy flock
Modest in traits, in motion dignified.
When those in front perceived my form to block
The beams of light on my right flank—which threw
My shadow upon the ground far as the rock—
They stopped and somewhat back, in wonder, drew;
While all who came behind in a long train
Hastened, not knowing why, the same to do.
—"Without your asking me, I shall explain
That human body is this that you see here
Which cuts daylight upon the ground in twain.
Believe ye then, and be of wonder clear,
That not without a heav'nly ordinance
He seeks how to surmount this steep barrier."—
The Master thus—"Turn back then and advance
With us—" replied that worthy company,
Signaling us with the back of their hands.
—"Whoe'er thou art—" then one addressed this plea
To me—"while going thus, turn thy regard,
Look if on earth didst ever meet with me."

I turned myself toward him and fixed him hard:
Of gentle traits he was, handsome and fair,
But one eyebrow by some fierce blow was scarred.
And when I humbly had denied that e'er
I had seen him:—"Behold!"—he added then,
Pointing a scar high on his bosom bare.
"Manfredi I am—" he smiling spoke again—
"Grandson of Empress Constance: I implore
—When thou return'st amidst the mortal men—
Go to my beauteous daughter, she who bore
The pride of Aragon and Sicily;
Tell her the truth perhaps not told before.
After my broken body was left to lie
Twice deadly pierced, in tears to Him I turned
Who listens freely to repentant cry.
Horrible were my sins but I have learned
That the Love Infinite holds arms outspread
To gather in all who for Him have yearned.
And if Cosenza's Shepherd, being sped
By Clement's order, my remains to hound,
Had in the text divine this page well read,
My body's bones would even now be found
By the bridgehead not far from Benevent
Beneath the shelter of the heavy mound.
But tossed by wind they are, by rain besprent,
Beyond the realm, almost by Verde's flow
Where he moved them with torches dark and bent.
Yet by their curse is not uprooted so
Th' eternal love, that ne'er again may rise
While on the stem of hope green blossoms grow.

136 In truth, if one in contumacy dies
Of Holy Church, e'en if contrite at last,
Outside this wall must stay no less than thrice
139 Ten times the span of life that he has passed
In his presumption, save when such decree
Partly, through worthy prayers, aside is cast.
142 Know then what joy I may receive from thee
If thou tell'st my good Constance that my shade
Thou hast met here, and of this ban on me;
145 For, those on earth to us can give much aid."—

Line 3—"Reason" means "reasoned justice."

15—The mountain of Purgatory is the highest on earth.

25—It was evening at Naples where the body of Virgil was buried, having been brought there from Brundusium. (Early forenoon in Purgatory).

29—The light passes unchecked through the heavenly spheres as it does through the shades' apparent bodies.

37—The "quia" or "because": that is, because God has so willed.

39—No need of the coming of Christ.

49—In the mountain region of the Genoese Riviera, from Lerici, near Spezia, to Turbia, near Monaco.

112, etc.—Manfredi was a grandson of Constance, wife of Henry VI Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, mother of Frederick II, his father. Manfredi's daughter (also named Constance) was the mother of Frederick, king of Sicily and of James, king of Aragon.

124, etc.—Slain at Benevento, fighting against Charles of Anjou, Manfredi was buried beneath a heap of stones (an honored warrior's grave) but the Bishop of Cosenza under orders of Pope Clement IV, had his bones thrown outside the realm of Naples, near the river Verde. This, because Manfredi was under excommunication; accordingly, the rite was carried out with torches unlit and reversed.

126—Had better read the Gospel lesson about mercy.

133, etc.—Yet, even under the curse of excommunication, the love of God is not exstinguished in man's heart and mercy may be obtained. But the sentence of the Church entails some penalty even in after life.

143—Constance, Manfredi's daughter.

CANTO IV

ARGUMENT

The Poets climb through a narrow rift till they reach a level but rocky roadway circling the hill. They meet here the souls of those who were too indifferent toward their eternal salvation.

When through some sorrow or through some delight
Which holds enslaved a faculty of ours
Within that scope the soul is gathered quite,
Seemingly oblivious of all other powers;
(This shows how were in error those who thought
That from one soul another springs and flowers)
Wherefore, if haply one looks or lists to aught
Which holds the soul attracted forcefully,
Time flies along and man will heed it not;
For, through one faculty we hear or see,
Other than that held by the soul entire—
The latter bounden-like, the former free.
Of this I did a truthful proof acquire
While, wond'ring, to that shade I listened on;
Since fifty or more degrees had risen higher

(Without my noticing) the morning sun,
When we came where all those unbodied shapes
Together shouted: "Here your quest is done."

Often a villein where the enclosure gapes
Fills in a wider rift with a fork's load
Of thorns (the time when are imbrowned the grapes)

Than was the passage into which we strode,
When we were left alone, my Guide and I,
Soon as that band of souls went on their road.

Downward to Noli, to San Leo up high,
Even Bismantua's tall crest, on foot
One climbs, but at this place a man must fly—

With wings, I mean, and plumes of that acute
Desire to follow my good counselor
Who gave me hope and lighted my pursuit.

We clomb within that rocky corridor
Whose surface on both sides pressed us quite close
And feet and hands were needed on the floor.

When on its upper hem at last we rose
Where open slope unrolled before our eyes—
"Master"— I said— "our path hence wither goes?"

"No downward step take thou"— was his advice—
"On to the height thy feet set after mine
Until shall come to us an escort wise."

The top beyond all view, and was th'incline
Such that a steeper grade we had to meet
Than has to center a mid-quadrant line.

I felt a-weary and started to entreat;
"Sweet father, turn and look; I fear, alone
I shall be left if thou stay'st not thy feet."

CANTO IV

"My son, draw thee this farther, by thy own
Efforts"—he said, and shewed a rocky belt
Which, somewhat higher, around the hill was thrown.

As by his spurring words I was impelled,
Down on all four I strove behind his trace
Until the ledge beneath my feet I felt.

We both found there a seat and turned our face
Unto the East wherefrom was our ascent
For, often, looking back new cheer conveys.

First to the lower shores my eyes I bent,
Then upward to the sun, and how its rays
Struck on our left, I looked in wonderment.

The Poet noted my astonished gaze
As I stood fixéd to the Chariot, where
Between the North and us it held the space.

Therefore he spoke to me: "If Castor were
And Pollux, in that mirror's company
Which throws above and underneath its glare,

The reddened Zodiac thou couldst now see
(Unless it had forsworn its ancient route)
Wheel closer in the Bears' vicinity.

Better to think of how this comes about,
Imagine Sion—in thy inmost thought—
Opposite placed to where this mount stands out.

The same horizon both must have, but not
An equal hemisphere—and hence the course
Where erring Phaeton to his grief was brought,

Must pass by this upon one side, perforce,
And pass by that upon the other side—
If well thy mind into this subject pores."

—"Truly, my Master, never so clear-eyed
Aught I have seen as I discern this thing:
(And this, methought, my intellect defied)
That the supernal motion's middle ring
(Equator in some art 'tis called and stands
Ever the Sun from Winter limiting)
For the reason thou giv'st hence must advance
Unto the North as much as it would show
To Sion's people, toward the warmer lands.
But, if it pleases thee, I fain would know
How long our path is yet; quite in excess
This mountain climbs than what my eyes can go."
He answered: "Such this mount is that the stress
Of climbing, at the start is e'er extreme,
But as one climbs the higher, it hurts the less.
Thus when the hill so comforting shall seem
To thee, that easy will be to move up high,
Just as the movement of a ship downstream,
Rest then assured that this trail's end is nigh.
For thy repose wait till that point is gained.
This well I know, nor more I need reply."
And of his words the sound had hardly waned
When close to us a voice was heard: "Perchance,
Earlier thou shalt be to rest constrained."
Both of us turned unto that sound at once
And on our left we saw a massive stone
On which so far had fallen not our glance.
Drawing that far, some souls we came upon
Who stood behind the rock and in its shade
And seemed in indolence their time to drone.

One of the throng his weariness displayed
Sitting with arms around his knees held tight
While downward upon them his face was laid.
"Sweet my Seigneur"—I said—"pray cast thy sight
On that so torpid one: were he indeed
Brother to Sloth, worse could not be his plight."
Thereon he slowly turned and gave us heed,
Causing his cheek along his thigh to slide,
And said: "Go up, then, thou of valiant breed!"
I knew then who he was and I defied
The weariness that made my breath short caught,
To go to him; and soon as by his side
I had arrived, his head a bit he brought
Upward and said: "See'st thou well how the sun
O'er thy left shoulder drives his chariot?"
His lazy motions and his words slow spun
Prompted my lips to form a little smile:
—"Belacqua, upon thy fate"—I then began—
"I grieve not now, but tell why all this while
Thou sittest here; waitest an escort, or
Again has hold of thee thy wonted style?' '
And he—"O brother, to go up, what for?
My entrance to the torments would be still
Banned by God's Angel, he who guards the door.
'Tis meet that first 'round me—outside that sill—
As long as in my life, the heavens turn;
For, till the end, no penance did I will—
Except that I some grant of time may earn
By prayer which comes from hearts that live in grace,
Because the other kind the Heavens spurn.''

136 Meantime the Poet sped ahead his pace
While saying: "Come, see how the sun is o'er
The point meridian; night already lays
139 Her feet upon Morocco's sandy shore."—

Line 5—Plato admitted a sensitive soul developing first, from which the intellectual soul would derive. Dante proves the unity of the soul.
10, etc.—The sensitive faculty being engaged, the other (the intellectual) excercized by the whole soul is kept in abeyance; the former is free—to act.
15—The whole circle being 360 degrees, the sun was now a little better than three hours from dawn.
25—Noli, San Leo: towns of difficult approach. Bismantua, a steep mountain.
42—That is, an inclination of better than 45 degrees.
57—In the northern hemisphere, one looking East has the sun on his right or toward the South—Dante did not realize that he was in the Southern hemisphere and hence had the sun on the left and toward the North. (Line 60).
59—The Chariot of the Sun.
61—If the constellation of Gemini (Castor and Pollux) were now with the Sun (the mirror which throws its light on the upper and on the lower hemisphere) instead of the Goat (see Purg. II, 57) thou wouldst see the Zodiac reddened by the Sun's light (that is, the Sun itself) proceed even closer to the Bears (that is, further North, nearer to Ursa Major). Disputed passage.
67—Sion is antipodal to the Mount of Purgatory; therefore when the course of the Sun (Phaeton tried once, unsuccessfully, to drive the Sun's chariot) is to the right of Sion, it must be to the left of Purgatory.
80—The Equator (as called in Astronomy) always has Summer—the Sun—on one side, and Winter on the other.
82—The Equator—from what has been said—must "hence" (from the Purgatory Mountain) have a position toward the North, corresponding to its position toward the South (the warmer lands) in respect to the people of Sion.
119—Mocking Dante for his slow understanding.
123—A Florentine, old friend of Dante's, evidently famous for his indolence.
130—Belacqua must wait as many years as his life was long, outside "that sill", or the door of Purgatory proper.

CANTO V

ARGUMENT

The Poets meet souls detained in the Ante-purgatory because they passed from this life by violent death and, while repentant, they had no time for temporal penitence. Some of them speak to Dante.

Now, having left those souls, I had begun
After my Guide to climb the arduous trail,
When, back of me, pointing his finger, one
Shouted: "Look ye, how seems the light to fail
Leftward of him who climbs in second place
And acts as if he were yet quick and hale!"
Hearing that voice I turned around my gaze
And saw those souls in a deep wonder stare
At me, at me, and at the broken rays.
—"Why is thy mind entrapped in such a snare"—
The Master said—"to make thy pace so slow?
What is to thee what may be babbled there?
Let people talk and follow where I go;
Stand firm like tower whose summit wavers not
No matter what fierce winds against it blow.

Always a man in whom shoots forth a thought
Upon a thought, removes from him the aim
Being their force from this to that distraught."
What words except "I come" can my lips frame?
And to my face some of that color flies
Which often for a man may pardon claim.
Meantime was coming on athwart the rise
A crowd, not far in front, by whom was sung
The "Miserere" in alternal wise.
And when came to the notice of that throng
That through my body I did not let the glare,
They changed their chant in an "Oh" hoarse and long.
Then from their ranks—as scouts sent to survey—
Ran two of them to us with this request:
"Make us aware of your condition, pray."
To them my Master: "Go and tell the rest
Of yonder band who here have sped your foot
That still the body of him with flesh is dressed.
And if his shadow's sight stopped their pursuit,
As I surmise, this is enough. To him
Let them give honor; haply 'twill bear fruit."
I never saw the vapors bright which limn
The still young night, so fast the heavens split—
Nor clouds in August when the sun grows dim—
As those I saw back to their fellows flit.
When there, with all the rest, they turnéd straight
To us, like horse without a checking bit.
—"This crowd which presses upon us is great"—
The Poet said—"They come for their distress
To pray; go, listen, slacking not thy gait."

—"O soul now going to thy happiness
Bearing the limbs that were gi'en thee at birth,
Let thy speed be"—they cried—"a little less.
Look whether any of us thou saw'st on earth,
That news of him thou may'st then carry hence.
Why goest thou on? A pause are we not worth?
We have all suffered death by violence
And, till the last, in sin we had been living;
Then Heaven's light warned us of our offense,
And so from life, repenting and forgiving
We did come forth and made with God our peace.
Yearning for sight of Him our heart is grieving."
I answered them: "For all my scrutinies
None I cognize; but ye, O spirits blest
At birth—if aught I can that may you please—
Speak and I shall perform it, for that rest
Which, following the feet of such a Guide,
From world to world I seek in eager quest."
And one of them began: "We all confide
In thy good heart, without an oath of thine,
'Less lack of power should thy goodwill o'erride.
Hence, first to speak alone of all who pine
With me, I beg if e'er thou see'st those lands
Which with Romagna and Charles' domain confine,
Kindly for me give voice to my demands
In Fano, that relieved by worthy prayer
From my great sins I gain deliverance.
That was my country, but the many a tear
From which gushed forth the blood on which I sate
In Antenor's domain I suffered—where

Safer I had thought me from such a fate.
'Twas work of him of Este, who for me
Held, more than it was right, a deadly hate.
But if I had toward Mira chanced to flee
When near Oriaco I was overta'en
Among the breathing men I still might be.
I to the marshes ran; 'mid mud and cane
Stumbling I fell and there a pool I made
Upon the ground from many a severed vein."
Another then: "So be the wish allayed
Which urges thee upon this mountain high,
With kindly pity give to mine thy aid.
From Montefeltro I was, Buonconte am I;
Joan and others have for me no care,
Thus shameful among these I move and sigh."
And I to him: "What force or chance did bear
Thee so far out the field of Campaldine
So that thy resting place was found nowhere?"
—"Oh!"—said he—"at the foot of Casentine
A stream, the Archiano, crosses the champaign
(Sprung o'er the Hermitage, on Appennine).
There, where its name, at last, is rendered vain
I made my way with wounded throat and cleft,
Fleeing on foot and bloodying the plain.
Of sight and word I found me there bereft:
Ended in Mary's name my speech and there
I fell, and there my flesh alone was left.
Bring to the world what truly I now declare:
God's Angel had grasped me, but Hell's fiend cried:
'O thou from Heaven why takest off my share?

Of him the eternal gain'st thou for thy side
Because one tear my sign on him did blot,
But I shall give the other a hard ride.'
Thou know'st that in the air together brought
Is that damp vapor which as rain descends
Soon as it climbs up where by cold is caught.
Came that ill-will which e'er to evil tends
With all his intellect, and wind and smoke
Moved, through the virtue which his nature lends.
Then was the vale, when night had spread its cloak,
Under a hovering sky with mist occlused
From Pratomagno far as to "Great Yoke."
The pregnant air to water was reduced,
The rain then fell and to the moats was drained
Whate'er of it the bulging soil refused.
And when the flood the larger currents gained
On to the royal stream so ruinous pressed
And fast, that naught could have its rush detained.
Close to its mouth, Archiano's swollen crest
My body found: that in the waves it cast
Of Arno and loosed the cross that on my breast
I made of me, when 'whelmed by pain at last.
It rolled me 'long its banks and o'er its bed:
Its spoils, like burial shroud, there held me fast."
After the second a third spirit said:
"When thou shalt see again the mortal strand
And rest shall have thy soul road-wearied,
Remember me: I am the Pia: the land
Made me of Siena—and Maremma unmade.
He knows, for whom another wedding band
My finger, gemmed before, new troth displayed."

Line 4—Dante, having now the sun at his right, casts a shadow to the left.

20—The flush of shame.

37—Shooting stars or cloudlets in a summer sunset.

64—This is Jacopo del Cassero, from Fano (See below)

69—The Marca of Ancona, between Romagna and the Kingdom of Naples ruled by Charles of Anjou.

74—The soul is speaking: according to some philosophers the soul "sat" on the blood.

75—In the territory of the city of Padua, where Antenor who came from Troy with Aeneas was supposed to have established his people.

77—The Marquis of Este (ruling family of Ferrara) had some reason to hate Jacopo del Cassero.

79—Had Jacopo fled toward the town of Mira, instead of going toward the marshes near the town of Oriaco, he might have escaped.

87—Help my wish.

88—Buonconte of Montefeltro fought at Campaldino on the Florence side against Arezzo. Dante was in that battle.

89—His wife.

94—The Casentine hills are approaches to the true Appennine where, at a place called the Hermitage, the Archiano has its source.

106—The soul.

108—The Devil would maltreat the "other", the body.

112—That "ill-will" is the Devil.

117—From the plateau of Casentino (Pratomagno) to the highest point of Appennine called "Gran Giogo" or "Great Yoke".

122—On to the Arno.

129—The flotsam of the flood sunk to the river bed.

130—Pia dei Tolomei, a lady from Siena who was murdered by her second husband in a castle in the Maremma region. Had been a widow.

CANTO VI

ARGUMENT

Dante frees himself from many souls who ask to be remembered to living relatives. He has a discussion with Virgil about the value of prayer. They meet the shade of Sordello, a poet from Virgil's birth-place and his display of love for his motherland prompts Dante to a bitter invective concerning the divided state of Italy.

Whene'er a game of dice is brought to a close
The one who happed to lose remains behind
Sadder and wiser, musing on his throws;
The crowd courts him to whom has chance been kind;
Some lead, some from the rear pull his dress hem,
And, alongside, some bring them to his mind.
Going, he harks to this and that of them—
Shaking one's hand he makes him stand aside
And thus succeeds the crowd's unrush to stem.
Like such was I amid that surging tide:
And so, by facing here and there around
And promising, from them myself I pried.
He from Arezzo who received death's wound
From the fierce arms of Ghino was in that throng;
And he who running in the chase was drowned.

There sought my notice, with his hands outflung,
Friedric Novello and he, in Pisa born,
Whose death made good Marzucco appear so strong.
I saw Count Orso, and the spirit torn
Out of his body but for envy and hate,
Not for foul deed of his, as he has sworn:
Peter La Brosse I mean—and ere too late
It grows, Brabante's lady should take heed,
Lest a worse flock may for her soul await.
When from the crowding souls myself I freed,
All praying that for them would others pray
And their becoming holy thus bespeed,
I thus began: "It seems thy words convey,
O light of mine, in some clear text expressed,
That Heav'n's decrees our prayers cannot gainsay,
And yet these people offer such request.
Do they then urge their hope on me, in vain,
Or I have not thy words well manifest?"
And he to me: "My writing is quite plain,
Nor is the purpose of their hope to fail
If one but looks with understanding sane.
Summit of judgment is not turned to vale
If in one point the flames of love complete
Whate'er is due by those along this trail.
And there wherein my words this question treat
For no defect could prayer have made amends
Because such prayer God's favor did not meet.
But on this doubt of high and inward sense
Dwell not, until she speaks who spreads between
Truth and men's mind her radiant effluence.

CANTO VI

Are my words clear? Beatrice I mean.
Reaching the summit of this mountainside
Thou shalt see her, in happiness serene."
And I: "Good Master, let us speed our stride.
I walk less weary than a while ago
And, see! the hill now throws a shadow wide."
He answered: "While this day gives us its glow
The furthest point we can, we shall obtain;
But else than thou may'st think the fact I know.
Before the top is reached, thou shalt again
See him return, now hidden by the coast
So that his rays thou cuttest not in twain.
But there behold a soul fixed at its post
All lonely and watching us: it will, maybe,
Show us the way to speed our climb the most."
Thereto we came: O soul from Lombardy
In what disdain thou stood'st and haughtiness!
How slow thine eyes and filled with dignity!
The spirit held aloof from any address
But let us go and only turned its eye
As crouching lion in his wild recess.
Then Virgil, to the spirit drawing nigh,
Asked for a way which would our climb reduce;
And to his words the shade made no reply
But what our country and of our life the news
It asked; my Master's lips could hardly phrase:
"Mantua..." and the soul all self-recluse
Toward him arose up from its former place
Saying: "O Mantuan, Sordello am I—
Of thy own land." Both fell to fond embrace.

Ah, thou woe-ridden, slavish Italy,
Masterless ship by raging tempest sway'd,
Not lady of realms, but den of harlotry;
Such eagerness then felt that noble shade,
Soon as he heard the motherland's sweet call,
And for his townsman such love he display'd;
And now in thee without a bloody brawl
Ne'er are thy sons: each other gnaw and wound
Those whom one moat encloses and one wall.
Search, luckless one, thy shores far flung around
Thy many seas; then in thy bosom look
If any part enjoying peace is found.
What matters if Justinian undertook
To bridle thee, when void the saddle stands?
Hadst thou no rein, less shame would thee rebuke.
Ah, people who should bow to just puissance
And let thy Caesar in the saddle sit
If clearly thou observed'st what God commands!
See how this beast has lost all of her wit,
For lack of the correction of the spur,
Since you have set your hand to hold her bit.
O German Albert, thou who hast left her
To her own wild caprice and savage bend,
While on the saddle should'st be, her Seigneur.
Oh, may just judgment on thy blood descend
From Heaven: clear and new, such to inspire
In thy successor fear lest he offend.
For you have this allowed, thou and thy sire,
Avid for what there yonder you may reap,
To go to waste the garden of th' Empire,

Come, see Montecchi and Cappelletti weep,
Monaldi and Filippeschi, if aught carest thou:
These fearful, those in woe already deep.

Come, cruel one, see 'neath what grief must bow
Thy nobles, and relieve their woeful plight;
See'st thou not Santafior how lifts its brow?

Come, see thy Rome who weeps and day and night
Like widow desolate invokes thy name:
"My Caesar, why art not here at my right?"

Come, see how bright burns here of love the flame.
And if no pity of us can make thee care
Come to grow shameful of usurpéd fame!

O Jove Supreme—if this to ask I dare—
Who on this earth for us wast crucified,
Haply thy righteous eyes are turned elsewhere?

Or by this preparation are we tried
While in thy counsel's depth is worked some good
Which falls of human judgment wholly wide?

For all Italian cities rules a brood
Of tyrants; grows like a Marcellus great
Whatever villein joins a civic feud.

Florence of mine, thou may'st well feel elate
As thou by this digression art not stung,
Thanks to thy men who steer so well the state.

Justice from many hearts is slowly flung
Forth, as it comes well pondered to the bow;
Thy people have it ready upon their tongue.

Weary of the public charge may many grow,
But loudly: "I'll shoulder it"—thy people cry:
Their answer, e'en uncalled, is never slow.

Be happy then, thou hast much reason why:
Thou wealthy, thou at peace, thou wisdom-fraught—
The facts show plainly whether here I lie.
Athens and Lacedemon, they who wrought
The ancient laws, much civil progress won;
Yet to right living gave but passing thought
Along of thee who unreel'st so finely spun
Ordinances that mid-November days
See thy October work already undone.
How often, well within thy memory's space,
Thou hast changed customs, offices and laws
And coins—and put new men in others' place?
And if thy mind such picture clearly draws,
Thou must perceive thyself as a sick wench
To whose distress the plumes afford no pause,
Who tries by shifting sides, her pains to quench.

Line 13—A Judge Benincasa, slain for revenge by Ghino di Tacco, a famed highwayman.

15—Another noble from Arezzo: Guido dei Tarlati; was drowned escaping from the field of Campaldino, (See Purg. V, 92).

17—Friedric of the Counts Guidi; killed in a brawl. The one "in Pisa born" is Farinata, son of Marzucco, a noted jurist who joined the Franciscan friars. Farinata having been murdered, Marzucco preached to the people on the duty of Christian forgiveness.

19—Count Orso degli Alberti, of Florence: murdered by relatives. Peter La Brosse was Chamberlain to King Philip III of France: he was hanged after false charges had been brought against him.

23—Mary of Brabante, wife to Philip III was supposed to have schemed for Peter's death.

CANTO VI

30—Virgil says (Aeneis, VI, 376): "Desist from hoping that the Gods' decrees may be bent by prayers."

42—The Pagans' prayers had not the value of the prayers of Christians who are in the state of grace.

44—Beatrice (Divine knowledge) will better explain this matter.

56—The sun. Another day is required for the journey.

62—Afterwards Dante finds the spirit to be that of Sordello, a troubadour from Mantua, who had left the earth since a few years. Mantua, birthplace also of Virgil, is in Lombardy; but "Lombardy" was in Dante's time a name given to all Italy.

88—The Emperor who compiled the Code of Roman laws.

91—This is addressed to the people who opposed the rule of the Emperor (of the Holy Roman Empire) in Italy; they held but loosely the bridle of the horse (Italy) unmounted by the Emperor.

97—Albert I, of Hapsburg, Emperor from 1298 to 1308.

102—Henry of Luxembourg succeeded Albert, and Dante placed great hope in him.

106—The Montecchi, Ghibellines of Verona, were carrying out a feud against the Cappelletti, Guelphs of Cremona. (Montague and Capulet). So the Monaldi of Perugia against the Filippeschi of Orvieto.

111—Iroincal; the Counts of Santafior, near Siena (Ghibellines) were in precarious position.

125—Roman Consul who dared defy Caesar.

130—The comparison is from the deliberate shooting of a selected arrow.

135—Their answer to the offer of public office.

142—Allusion to the oft-changing laws of Florence.

CANTO VII

ARGUMENT

Sordello leads Dante and Virgil toward a pleasant dale in the mountain coast where Kings and other rulers are waiting for the coming night. Sordello points out some of the more notable figures.

After by love and courtesy inspired
They had each other three, four times embraced,
Back drew Sordello and "Who are ye?" inquired.
"Ere to this mountain the first journey traced
The souls judged worthy of the divine ascent,
My bones at rest had Octavianus placed.
Virgil am I; from Heaven banishment
I suffer"—answered he—"and, only blot,
The lack of faith my bliss did not consent."
As acts a man when face to face is brought
To sudden thing: he stands a-wondering,
Believes and disbelieves: 'tis, it is not—
Sordello thus; his eyes then lowering,
Humble in aspect moved toward him and prone
Embraced him where the lesser man would cling.

"Glory of the Latin race, thou who hast shown
How high could reach our language; thou, the vaunt
Eternal of the place I call my own,
What merit or what grace brings me in front
Of thee? If I am worthy of words of thine
Tell whether comest from Hell and from which haunt."
"Through all the circles of the realm malign"—
He answered—"I have reached this mountainside;
I have been moved and come through power divine.
Not deeds of mine, but lack of deeds denied
To me the Sun toward whom thy yearnings rise:
Too late 'twas known to me to be my guide.
Below is region where no torture plies
The souls, save that of darkness, and laments
Sound there no note of woe, but are but sighs.
There is my place amidst the innocents
Who felt of death the teeth while still unblest
And still uncleansed from the first man's offense.
There is my place with those who were not dressed
With the three holy virtues, but who knew
And followed, shunning vices, all the rest.
But if thou know'st and can'st, give us some clue
That may help us in shorter time to find
Of the Purgative Realm the entrance true."
He answered: "No set place we are assigned;
Further to climb and move around we may—
I shall lead you far as may go my kind.
But see how doth already incline the day,
And it is not allowed to climb by night.
'Tis well to think of a fair place to stay.

CANTO VII

A space from us some souls are, on our right.
If thou so wishest, I shall lead thee there.
Thou shalt not know of them without delight."

'Twas answered: "Why is that? Should someone dare
To climb at night, by whom would he be faced
And held, or else what would his strength impair?"

And good Sordello then his finger traced
Upon the soil and said: "This line beyond,
After sunset, thy foot could not be raised.

No other thing would lay on thee a bond
Against the climb, but night's own dark dismay;
Through that, lacking effect, the will is stunned.

We could, with it, still follow a downward way
And wandering walk the mountainside around
While the horizon holds enclosed the day."

Although his speech my Master seemed astound,
He said: "Lead us thereto, where thou hast said
That pleasure in our waiting may be found."

Not long from there we had moved on ahead
When I perceived the mountain coast recede
As here is hollowed out a valley's bed.

"Follow that far"—the shade then said—"my lead,
Where in itself the mount withdraws, lap-wise,
To wait the break of day whose light ye need."

A winding path we trod, 'twixt plain and rise,
And to the valley's flank on that we drew
Where more than at half-way the border dies.

Fine gold and silver, sheer white, Indian blue,
Cochineal, gleaming wood without a stain,
And emerald fresh-cut that glimmers true,

Each one of them would find its colors wane
Besides the grass and flowers in that dell
As by the greater is the less made vain.

Nor there had Nature only painted well,
But of a thousand odours' suavity
Had made a vague and a most rare sweet smell.

SALVE REGINA—came this song to me
From spirits seated on the flowery mead
Whom, for the vale, so far I could not see.

"Before the waning sun shall touch its bed"—
The Mantuan said, who had shown us that trail—
"Amidst those souls desire not to be led.

This ridge shall be to you of more avail
To know of all therein the acts and face,
Than if you were with them within the vale.

He who sits highest and whose mien displays
Sorrow for duty that he did neglect—
And with the rest his voice he doth not raise—

Emperor Rudolph is, who might have checked
The plagues that carried death to Italy
(Late, others try her life to resurrect).

Close by, see one who gives him comfort: he
Ruled o'er the regions which the current taps
Carrying Moldau in Elbe, Elbe to the sea.

Ottocar named he was; in nursling's wraps
Better was he than Wenceslaus his son,
A bearded man, who sloth and luxury laps.

Mark him, besides, whom beauty and grace adorn,
Close counseling with him of smallish nose
Who died in flight and left the Lily torn:

See how he strikes his breast with rueful blows!
See how his partner sighs, whose cheek and jaw
Upon his palm, as cradle, find repose.
One is the father, one father-in-law
Of France's curse; they know that every wrong
And vice soils him, hence them such sorrows gnaw.
And he so large of limbs, whose notes in song
With him who has the manly nose accord,
With all the virtues' cord his loins made strong.
If after him the realm had known as lord
The youth who back of him there has his seat
From vase to vase would virtue have been poured.
Of th' other heirs this I cannot repeat;
Though James and Frederick each has his reign
The better heritage is in escheat.
Seldom doth human worth springs up again
Out of the shoots: its Giver so decreed
That over it we acknowledge His domain.
To him of the large nose applies this rede
And so to Peter—singing there at one—
For whom already Apulia and Provence bleed.
Worse is the plant which from his seed has grown
As Constance gives her husband higher praise
Then Beatrix and Margaret their own.
See there how lonely Henry of England stays;
In simple life his kingly crown he bore
And better limbs 'twas given him to raise.
See Marquis William: on the valley floor
He sits up looking, where the ground's most deep;
For him, through Alexandria and her war
Must Monferrat and Canavese weep."

Line 4—Before the Passion of Christ opened the path to Purgatory, Virgil had been buried by Octavianus Augustus.

26—The true God.

32—Before receiving Baptism.

35—The Christian virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.

56—Night symbolizes the darkness of ignorance in the human intellect. Ignorance deprives the will of its power to attain a higher life level.

58—With night.

72—Uncertain phrase in the original. Possibly: "'Where the rim of the valley ends (into a bare declivity) at a point more than half-way (of the whole depth).

94—He failed to act for the peace of Italy.

100—King of Bohemia. Had been killed in a battle against Rudolph.

103—The one "of smallish nose" who strikes his breast is Philip III, of France who died in a disastrous retreat from Aragon when the Lily of France had been dishonored. His partner "adorned with beauty" is Henry of Navarre: the former the father, the latter father-in-law of Philip IV, "France's curse."

112—Peter III (the Great) of Aragon makes a couple with Charles I of Anjou (of manly nose). They had been fierce enemies.

116—This youth is the fourth of Peter's sons; he died quite young.

118—James and Frederick were sons of Peter the Great.

124, etc.—Frederick, son of Peter, ruled Apulia (Naples) and Charles II, son of Charles I, of Anjou, Provence: both realms were suffering from misrule.

127—The plant from the seed of Charles I of Anjou (that is, Charles II) is so much worse as Constance (wife of Peter) has better reason to praise her husband than Beatrix and Margaret (first and second wife of Charles I) have to praise theirs.

130—Henry III, father of Edward.

133—Marquis William of Monferrat (Piedmont). In revenge for his death his son John I, carried on a war against Alexandria and other Guelph towns of Piedmont.

CANTO VIII

ARGUMENT

The three poets descend into the "Valley of the Kings" and Sordello points out various personages. They witness certain symbolical happenings of attempted and repulsed temptation. Dante meets an old friend and hears from another shade a prophecy of events that will concern him.

It was the hour which casts a longing spell
On men at sea and melts their heart away,
The day they said to their sweet friends 'farewell!'
And stabs new pilgrimer with love's dismay
If by his ear the distant sound is caught
Of bells that seem to mourn the dying day;
When I began to give less of my thought
To list'ning, while I fixed, amidst the throng,
A shade, upright, whose hand for silence sought.
It joined and lifted up both palms, while clung
Its gaze unto the East; its voiceless word
Seemed to tell God: "For nothing else I long."
TE LUCIS ANTE so devoutly poured
Forth from its lips and in such mellow tone
That out of my own mind enrapt I soared.

And all the others through the valley strown
Sweetly and devoutly followed to the end,
Their eyes e'er fixéd upon Heav'n alone.

Now, reader, to the truth thou must attend
With cloudless eyes: so subtle is the veil
That to pass through no effort one would spend.

I saw that noble band in the sweet dale
Wrapt in deep silence, looking to the sky
In anxious waiting, humble all and pale.

And then I saw forthcoming from on high
Two Angels bearing flaming swords on hand
Which were cut short and of their point were shy.

Green as new leaves which from the stem expand
Appeared their robes, and by their pinions green
I saw the trailing garments struck and fanned.

Right upon us stood still the heavenly sheen
Of one, and stood the other messenger
Opposite, so the spirits were between.

Well I could see the Angel's golden hair
But to look in their face no virtue I had
As what exceeds its scope no power can bear.

"From Mary's bosom both of them have sped"—
Thus spoke to us Sordello"—to keep wide
From here the snake which soon will show its head."

Fearful, I turned about to every side
Whence it might come, and hurried me to cling,
In a cold shiver, to my faithful Guide.

"Into the vale let us be hastening
To those great shades"—again Sordello spake—
"Your visit shall to them much pleasure bring."

CANTO VIII

Three steps, methinks, downgrade I had to take
To reach the hollow and saw a shade intent
At me, as if I did old memories wake.

The air was by this time with dusk besprent
But to his eyes and mine the lingering glow
Made now what had been hidden, evident.

We neared each other, and what a joyous bow,
Nino, thou gentle Judge, touched every chord
In me, when not among the lost didst show.

No tender greeting was by us ignored;
After, he questioned: "When didst thou attain
This mountain from the far away sea board?"

"I came"—said I—"this morn from the domain
Of woe, and still in my first life am I,
Though by this path I hope the next to gain."

Soon as by them was heard this my reply
Sordello and he drew back a space, dismayed
As people facing wonders suddenly.

To Virgil one, the other turned to a shade
Sitting close by and cried: "Currado, arise!
See how God's grace has here its power displayed."

And then to me: "For such unwonted guise
Of favor from the One who so doth hide
His primal motives, past all man's surmise,

When thou shalt be beyond this mighty tide
Tell my Joan that she for me implore
Where prayer of blameless lips is not denied.

Her mother, I believe, loves me no more,
Since her white weeds she doffed—and now she's grieved
And to her brow those bands she would restore.

From her may be quite easily perceived
How fire of love in woman quickly is gone
If oft by sight or touch 'tis not retrieved.

It will not look so well—her grave upon—
The viper which Milan calls to the field
As certes would Gallura's cock have done."

While he was speaking was his aspect sealed
With that firm zeal for justice, by whose fire
Is a well ordered heart to virtue steeled.

Skyward my eyes were turned, with fond desire,
Right where their course the stars appeared to slow,
As near the hub a wheel has slower gyre.

My Master then: "My son, what watchest so
Up there?"—and:—"Those three flamelets"—answered I—
"With which this part of heaven is aglow."

"Those four clear stars"—to me came his reply—
"Thou saw'st this morn, now hold the nether sphere
And these have climbed into their place on high."

While thus he spoke, Sordello drew him near
And said: "See how our foe attempts intrude"—
And showed, with finger pointed, where to peer.

Across the side where the small valley stood
Unbarred, a serpent could be seen to sneak—
Such, haply, as gave to Eve the bitter food.

'Mid grass and flowers came on that evil streak
Revolving oft its head and with its tongue
Licking its back as beasts to make them sleek.

I did not see—so cannot tell my song—
How the celestial Falcons left their height,
But well I noticed how they sped along.

CANTO VIII

As the green plumes flapped through the air, in fright
The serpent ran; the Angels, wheeling 'round,
Back to their stations winged an even flight.

The shade which by the Judge rose from the ground
When called by him, all during that assault
Upon my face had kept its vision bound.

—"So may thy guiding light find no default
Of wax in they free will and lead thee through
Up to thy goal and to the highest small"—

Thus he began to speak—"If tidings true
Thou hast of Valdimagra or places nigh,
Pray tell, for some world-greatness there I knew.

Know that Currado Malaspina am I.
I sprang from him of old, and for my blood
I held the love that here I purify."

"Oh!"—answered I—"I never was abroad
Into your country, but in Europe, where
Lives now a man who doth your name not laud?

The fame that honors all your house, seigneur
Proclaims and villein too, of one accord;
And even they must know who were not there.

And so may I still higher climb, my Lord,
I swear your honored kinsmen still retain
The graces of the purse and of the sword.

Nature and use for them such favor gain
That while the world goes warped, through guilty head,
They alone walk straight and the wrong path disdain."

And he: "Now go, and know that on the bed
Of heaven covered by the Ram's four feet
Not seven times again the Sun shall spread.

When such a kind belief, with other cleat
Shall in the middle of thy head be driven
Than that of others' speech—if from the seat
Of Judgment is not stopped the course of heaven."—

Line 1—The "Angelus" hour.

13—The hymn of the Church office at "compline" recited at the close of day: "Ere light comes to its end."

21—One might pass on without adverting to the symbolical meaning.

27—The swords are not to be used in real warfare.

36—No faculty can withstand what is beyond its range.

52—The figure is not in the original, but it has a certain Dantesque flavor. This Nino was of the Guelph Visconti of Pisa; but a dear friend of Dante's.

71—Joan, a young daughter of Nino Visconti.

73—Beatrice d'Este, Nino's wife, had married again into the Visconti family of Milan (Ghibellines).

79—The Milan Visconti had a viper on their coat-of-arms. Nino, as Judge (or Prefect) of Gallura (in Sardinia) displayed a cock on his.

86—Toward the Pole where the stars circle with slower motion.

89—The three stars are symbols of the three theological virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity.

91—See Purg. I, 23.

109—This is Currado Malaspina, Marquis of Lunigiana (north of Tuscany) namesake of an ancestor even more celebrated. The House of Malaspina was very hospitable to Dante.

114—"Smalt"—for the changeless, vivid green of the meadow of Terrestrial Paradise, at the top of the mountain.

116—Valdimagra, the principal valley of Lunigiana.

112—May the guiding light (of grace) finds thy free will receptive enough (as a seal upon wax).

119—Excessive love for his kin.

131—The "head" of the world: both Pope and Emperor are going astray.

133—Before the sun shall occupy again, as it does now, the part of the sky where the Constellation of the Ram is seen: which would happen after seven years. At that time Dante would have experienced the hospitality of the Malaspina.

CANTO IX

ARGUMENT

The Poet has a dream which is suggested by his removal, while asleep, from the flowery dale to a place above the forbidding cliff which surrounds Purgatory proper. Lucia has taken him up. Virgil and Dante pass the Portals of Purgatory.

Now old Tithonus' concubine grew white
Over the balcony of the Orient,
Forsaking her friend's arms and their delight.
Her forehead was with gleaming gems besprent
In shape of that cold animal that stings
With blows whereof his tail is instrument.
And where we stood, beside the noble kings,
Night had now climbed two steps in upward gait,
The third already had turned down its wings.
And I who carried still of Adam's weight,
Sleep-conquered, lay myself on the green floor
Where all the five of us already sate.
When, near the morn, the swallow 'gins to pour
Her mournful lays and seems e'en yet to pine—
Mindful perhaps of her sad fate of yore—

And farther from the flesh and its confine
Wanders our mind and less with thoughts 'tis fraught,
(Then grow its visions almost divine)
I saw suspended in the sky—methought,
In dream—an eagle having plumes of gold
Who with his wings wide-opened, downward shot.
And in that place I was, as fancy told,
Where Ganymede his kin left and the chase
And to the highest Council was extolled.
I thought: "Perhaps this is his wonted place
To strike, disdaining anywhere but here
In his strong talons to lift up his preys."
Then a short while he seemed around to veer
And fearsome like a lightning down he sped
Snatching me upward to the fiery sphere.
There he, meseemed, and I burned in a red
Flame, and so hot was that that imagined blaze
That, of a sudden, sleep my senses fled.
As when Achilles, roused in startled daze,
Not knowing where he was, upon the sweep
Of strange landscape did move his wakened gaze—
The time his mother stole him while asleep
From Chiron unto Scyros, on her breast
(Later took him the Greeks upon the deep)—
Thus sleep which fled my face left me to wrest
With such a wonder and I waxed death-white
As man who freezes when by fear oppressed.
Alone by me my Comfort stood, and quite
Two hours in his advance the Sun was old
And turnéd to the Ocean was my sight.

46 —"Throw off"—said my Seigneur—"of fear the hold.
We come to a happy point; all doubts depose—
Let all thy powers not shrivel, but unfold.

49 Now thou hast reached the Purgative Enclose:
See there the cliff whereof all 'round 'tis sealed.
The entrance see, there where a fissure shows.

52 But shortly ago, when dawn began to yield
To morn—thy soul within asleep did lie
Upon the flowers which adorn that field—

55 A woman came and said: "Lucia am I;
Let me take up this man with sleep now weighed,
That I may ease his journey aimed so high."

58 With th' other gentle forms Sordello stayed;
But she took thee and when daylight clear shone—
I following her trace—she clomb the grade.

61 She laid thee here, and first that entrance yon
Which thou see'st gaping, her fair eyes shew'd me;
Then she, together with thy sleep, was gone."

64 As man who changes doubts for certainty
And into comfort turns his former fright—
For the discovered truth has made him free—

67 Like such I changed and, seeing me so light
Of heart, my Guide resumed his wonted pace
And after him I moved, on towards the height.

70 Reader, thou well perceive'st how now I raise
My matter higher—with greater art of speech
Wonder not then, if I my structure brace.

73 Nearer we draw and such a point we reach
Whence, where at first naught but a cleft had shown
(As may a wall be parted by a breach)

I see a gate, and up to its sill-stone
Three steps of color different—and there
A Guardian, silent yet, who stands alone.

As keener waxed my sight, I grew aware
Of Him who sat upon the topmost grade
Whose radiant face my vision could not bear.

And in his hand he held a nakéd blade
Reflecting upon us such gleaming fire
That there to fix my eye I vainly essayed.

He then spoke forth: "What do you here desire?
Where is your escort? Stay; give your replies.
Take heed lest you be harmed by coming higher."

"A heav'nly Lady in all these secrets wise"—
Answered my Guide—"told us, but a short space
Ago; 'Aim yonder, there the entrance lies."

"May she on your advance bestow her grace"—
The courteous gateman spoke to us anew—
"Come forward to the foot of our staircase."

Advancing, close to the first step we drew:
It was white marble, smooth and polished o'er
So that my traits in it were mirrored true.

The second was like sable black, and more—
And made of scorchéd rock of a rough grain:
Several cracks in length and width it bore.

The third, whose mass the two below sustain,
Porphiry seemed, as flaming red as would
Appear the blood that spurts out of a vein.

God's Angel with both feet upon this stood
While he had made his seat upon the sill
Which from a diamond block seemed to be hewed.

CANTO IX

O'er the three steps drew me with eager will
My Guide who said meanwhile: "Humbly request
That he unbolt the portal to the hill."

I threw me at those feet forever blest
Begging for him to ope, and mercy I craved;
But first three times I beat upon my breast.

Seven "P's" on my brow he then engraved
With his sword-point, and—"When within, so do"—
He spoke in warning—"that those scars are laved."

Ashes or earth dug dry have such a hue
As have the vestments which his form enfold;
From under them two keys the Angel drew.

Of silver one, the other was of gold:
First with the white, then with the yellow key
He plied the door so that I was consoled.

Again he spoke to us: "Should e'er fail me
Either of these, refusing to turn right
Within the lock, this path unoped must be.

More precious this, but wants this other quite
More skill and knowledge ere the bolt is freed;
To solve the knot this only has the might.

From Peter I hold them, who said 'Exceed
In opening rather than in keeping barred'
If at my feet the people will but plead."

The Holy Portal's door then oped he jarred.
—"Enter"—said he—"but keep in mind that flung
Without are those who backwards dare regard."

When, turning on their ancient hinges, swung
Around the corners of the sacred door—
Which are of metal resonant and strong—

Was not so hard Tarpeia, nor such roar
It gave, when good Metellus thence was sent
Away, and meager it remained therefore.
While I to the first thunder harked, intent,
TE DEUM LAUDAMUS in my hearing rang
And was the chanting with sweet music blent.
The very image in my memory sprang
From what I heard, such as in us is stirred
When with an organ's harmonies we sang,
That only now and then the words are heard.

CANTO IX

Line 1—Aurora (Dawn) enamored of the young mortal Tithonus had obtained immortality for him but had not asked for eternal youth, whence Tithonus was growing "old" continually.

5—The constellation named after the Scorpion, supposedly a cold-blooded animal whose tail contained poison.

7—Two hours of night had passed: the third was almost gone.

13—The sisters Procne and Philomela had been transformed into the swallow and the nightingale for some offense to the Gods.

22—On Mount Ida, where the youth Ganymede was taken away from a hunting party—to serve the Gods on Olympus. Jove had transformed himself into that eagle.

31—Possibly a foreshadowing of the love-flame of Purification, the realm of which Dante was about to enter.

34—Achilles' mother stole him from his guardian Chiron and thought him safer on the island of Scyros, but he was discovered even there and persuaded to join the Greeks at Troy: which, according to the Oracle would bring them victory but death to him.

55—Lucia is the symbol of Grace.

76, etc.—The Angel and other details of the following scene are figures of the Sacrament of Penance through which sins are forgiven and the gate opened to meritorious penitence. The Angel's sword is the Sword of Justice. The three steps up to the Portal signify Examination of Conscience, Sorrow and the Resolve to love God.

112—The initial letter of "Peccatum" or "Sin"; the reference is to the Seven Capital Sins.

115—The color symbolic of Penance.

118—The golden key represents the authority of the Confessor, the silver key his knowledge.

136—Julius Caesar forced entrance into the Temple holding the Roman Treasury, built on the Tarpeian rock, ousting the Tribune Metellus who protested. The rock, legend would have it, trembled and the Temple doors opened with great reluctance.

138—Denuded of its wealth.

140—"Thee, O God, we praise"—the Church hymn of jubilation.

CANTO X

ARGUMENT

Reaching the first of the seven cornices of Purgatory, where penance is done for Pride, Dante observes certain sculptured scenes—on the mountain's side—showing examples of great humility. A group of souls is met.

We then moved on and passed within that gate
Through men's mistaken love so little used
(The love which makes the crookéd road seem straight);
I heard the sound, when it was shut, produced
And had I turned, to look at it, my gaze
How could have been my failure justly excused?
Now a cleft rock to us a path purveys
Whose edges undulate on either side
Like waves that forward come, then backward race.
"Here must some artfulness direct our stride,
And moving to and fro we must hug close
To the receding wall"—began my Guide.
Thereon our feet with such scarce motion rose
And fell, that we could see near to her bed
The waning moon approach, for her repose,

Ere through that needle's eye our path could thread;
But soon as open and uncurbed we stood—
Up, where the mountain gathers in its spread—
I, tired, and both of us in wondering mood
About our path, we stopped upon a plain
Lonely even more than roads through solitude.
From its sheer falling edge to where again
Rises the coast on the side opposite
Three times a human body might be lain;
And far as thence my eye its wings could beat
Now to the left, now to the right distent,
The selfsame cornice it would ever meet.
Our feet had not yet moved on that enceinte
When, as my mind on that round steepness dwelt
(Where least it would permit of any ascent)
Of candid marble there I saw a belt
With such reliefs that Polycletus, or
Nature herself there humbled would have felt.
The Angel who to earth the edict bore
Granting the peace wept for—so many a year —
Which, after the long ban, oped Heaven's door,
There loomed in front of us so true and clear
Sculpted in act of gentle suavity
That silent image he did not appear.
That "AVE" he spoke, one had sworn readily,
For there was, too, the image of the maid
Who held of the high love the unlocking key.
And by her aspect were the words conveyed:
"ECCE ANCILLA DEI", with clear-cut art
Such as of figure into wax inlaid.

46 —"Keep not thy mind on only a single part"—
Spoke my sweet Master then, as I stood by
And flankéd him where mortals have their heart.
49 As at his word I moved ahead my eye
I saw, past Mary, upon the side where him
I had who had led me thus far and high,
52 Another story engraved on that hard rim.
Then, Virgil crossed, so near to it I came
That distance could no more my sight bedim.
55 Sculpted appeared within the marble frame
The oxen drawing Ark and chariot—
Whence unappointed office men disclaim.
58 In front of it a marching crowd was wrought,
In seven choirs; and of my senses two
Were moved to say: "They sing"—and—"They sing not".
61 In the same manner from the censers blew
The figured smoke, such that of "no" and "yes"
Between my eyes and smell a discord grew.
64 Preceding the blest vase, in humbleness
The Psalmist raised his feet to dancing mode,
Being in that more than a King and less.
67 And at a window of a princely abode
In front of him, a sculpted Michal gazed
And her disdain and sorrow plainly showed.
70 From where I stood, not a long way I paced
To view another group—with sight unstrained—
Which a white glimmer, after Michal, raised.
73 The glory of him who o'er the Romans reigned
Was sculpted there; his worth so great had been
That Gregory for him such victory gained.

Trajan, the noble Emperor, I mean;
And a poor widow at his bridle prayed—
Tears in her grieving aspect could be seen.
Around him stood a press of closely arrayed
Horsemen, and in their gold—above him strung—
Wind-blown, as sight declared, the eagles swayed.
The grieving woman 'midst that mighty throng
Appeared to say: "Give me revenge, Seigneur,
For my son murdered, whence my heart is wrung."
And—"Wait a while"—he seemed to answer her—
"Till I come back"—"My Lord"—she spoke again
As one whose sorrow is to itself a spur—
"If thou comest not?"—"Who else my place obtain
Shall grant thee that"—"Others' good deed what may
Avail to thee, if thine calls thee in vain?—
He then: "I must, before I journey away,
Absolve my duty: be thou heartened then:
Justice wills it, and pity bids me stay."
The One who sees all things with timeless ken
That sermon visible has there infused
So strange because 'tis past all arts of men.
While I with great delight looked on and mused
Upon the image of each humble deed—
More precious if we think by Whom produced—
The Poet murmured: "Yonder, now, give heed;
Great crowd is coming, though with tardy pace.
They shall advice how further to proceed."
And I, content, so far, all 'round to gaze
E'er fond of things where novelty is displayed,
Unto my Master was not slow to face.

I pray, O reader, thou be not dismayed
And from thy good resolve do not relent
Hearing how God requires that debts be paid.
Do not attend the form of punishment;
Think of what follows—and past the great decree
This cannot last, e'en in the worst event.
"Master"—I 'gan—"what coming here I see
Toward us, with human forms I cannot square;
I ken it not and sight plays false to me."
"So heavily on them their burdens bear
That to the ground they bend"—he spoke anew—
"At first my eyes have had a struggle there.
But watch thou close and with thy sight unscrew
What is beneath that the great rocks conveys;
Thou may'st see now how each of them doth rue."
O prideful Christians, poor unhappy race,
Who in the vision of your mind infirm
Trust in such steps that move in backward trace,
Perceive ye not that man is but a worm
Born to produce the Angelic butterfly
Whose flight has staveless Justice for its term?
How doth your spirit dare to soar so high?
Insects ye are whose growth has been repressed,
Like worms in which formation goes awry.
As where the beams of roof or ceiling rest
A figure corbel-wise at times one sees
Which huddles up its knees unto its breast,
Causing real anguish for feignéd agonies
In him who looks: in such an attitude
I saw them when I looked with greater ease.

And while some more, some less contracted shewed,
According to the burden which they bore,
The one who suffered in most patient mood
Seemed to be sobbing forth: "I can no more."

Line 15—In the season of Dante's journey the moon would set about four hours after sunrise.

30—Uncertain in the original. Seems to indicate that the "marble belt" (line 31) was in perpendicular position.

32—Famous Greek sculptor.

34, etc.—The scene of the Annunciation. "Ecce ancilla Dei" are the words of the Virgin: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

39—Dante was at Virgil's left.

55, etc.—Line 57 refers to Uzzah who was struck by the Lord for having presumed to touch the Ark. The rest of the episode concerns the humility of King David. Michal was Saul's daughter.

75—A medieval legend told how Pope Gregory the Great by his prayers obtained the release of Trajan from Hell.

110—Purgatory cannot last past the Day of Judgment and the final Great Decree. On several occasions Dante indicates that the sufferings in Purgatory are rather symbolical and not as grievous as they appear, and that the main instrument of Purification is the aroused love for God.

123—Those who, in their pride, think they are advancing, are really going backwards.

CANTO XXII

CANTO XI

ARGUMENT

On the first cornice of Purgatory are met the spirits whose sins (forgiven but not wholly satisfied for) were caused by Pride. Two of these spirits speak to Dante.

"Our Father, thou who in the Heavens art,
Not bounden, but for love of higher degree
Which to the First Effects thou dost compart,
Let by thy creatures ever lauded be
Thy name and power, as it is just and meet
To praise thy sweet effusion thankfully.
Thy kingdom's peace on us we fain entreat,
As by ourselves to it we cannot rise;
Should it not come, our efforts court defeat.
As their own wills thy Angels sacrifice
—Singing Hosanna—to thy high commands,
E'en so move men with theirs to do likewise.
Give us this day our daily sustenance,
For, if that lacks, in this dour wilderness
Backwards must move who hardest tries advance.

As we forgive all those through whom distress
Has come to us, thus be thy mercy shown:
Forgive us, though we may be meritless.
Our power which is so easily overthrown
Pit not against our ancient enemy:
Save us from him who worries so thy own.
But this last prayer, dear Lord, we lift to thee
Not for ourselves, because there is no need,
But for all those from earthly bonds not free."
Thus for their own and for our sake, good speed
Praying, those souls went on beneath the weight—
In image such as oft our dreamings breed—
Around the mountain—with unequal freight—
On that first cornice, bent and wearied
Purging the soot left by their worldly state.
If there for us good words are always said,
Here, where to speak and do for them, a power
Rests in those wills which from good root are fed,
Indeed we should give aid those marks to scour
Which hence they carry, so they may ascend
Lightened and cleansed, unto the starlit bower.
"So Justice may, and Mercy, your form unbend
Shortly, so that your wing may freely sweep
And lift you up where all your yearnings tend,
To reach the stairs most quick, must we needs keep
To right, or left? If not a single road
But more climb up, point out the one least steep;
Because this my road-fellow, by the load
Of Adam's flesh with which he still is dressed,
Unto the climb, against his will, is slowed."

Their words which answered those of the request
Spoken by him I followed as true guide,
From whom were uttered, 'twas not manifest;

But—"Come with us"—'twas said—"on the right side
Along this rim and you shall find the cleft
That to one living may a path provide.

Were it not that no ease to me is left
By this great rock that my proud brow doth tame,
Whence of all upward sight my eyes are 'reft,

To him still living who gives not his name
I fain would look if haply a man I knew
And for this burden then his pity claim.

Latin, and Tuscan born, my life I drew
From great Aldobrandesco; I know not
Whether his name has ever been with you.

So old my blood, such shining deeds had wrought
My sires, that I grew boastful and headstrong,
Giving our common mother hardly a thought,

And on all men my utter scorn I flung;
Whence came my death as the Sanese may tell
And may in Campagnatico every tongue.

I am Omberto and not alone my knell
By pride was struck, but through it were led
Into misfortune, all my kin as well.

And here beneath this load I bend my head
Till God is paid, since I had failed before
Among the living, here among the dead."

The wish to hear caused me my face to lower;
Another, while the former voice had died,
Wriggled beneath the curbing load he bore.

Seeing and knowing me, my name he cried
Keeping his eyes with a great effort aimed
At me, who wholly bent walked alongside.
"Art thou not Oderisi"—I then exclaimed—
"Honor of Gubbio and of that art of thine
Illuminating by Parisians named?"
"Brother"—he said—"with sweeter smiles now shine
The leaves by Franco from Bologna traced;
Full honor now is his, and in part mine.
Forsooth, in life I would have shunned this haste
In courteous praising, for, to be supreme,
Was the great yearning that in my heart blazed.
Here such a pride these penalties redeem;
But had I not, still sinful, turned to gain
God's grace, I would not be upon this seam.
Oh, how the glory of all man's powers is vain!
How shortly upon its top the green endures
Unless by the gross ages overta'en!
The field of painting Cimabue secures
A while for him, then Giotto is hailed as best
And of the former the renown obscures.
Thus doth one Guido from the other wrest
The glory of our speech, and born, perchance,
Is one who both shall chase out of their nest.
Naught else it is but breath which the wind fans,
Your human noise: and hence and thence it blows,
And many-named it comes from many lands.
Shalt thou have longer fame, shouldst thou depose
Thy flesh when old, than shouldst thou end thy days
Ere infant speech its "pappo" and "dindi" outgrows—

A thousand years from now? A shorter space
To time eterne, than what a twinkled eye
Is to the heaven wheeled with slowest pace.
Of him who ahead of me so sparingly
Takes of the road, all Tuscany used to shout:
Whispers of him will soon in Siena die;
Where he was lord when dashed was to the ground
The rage of Florence, at that time, superb
But to cur's snarling now it has been downed.
All your renown is like the green of herb
Which comes and goes and he dissolves its hue
Through whom out of the earth it springs acerb."
And I: "Great tumor have removed thy true
Words and my heart is softened now and meek;
But tell: from thee such comment wise who drew?"
He then: "Of Provenzan Salvani I speak.
For his presumption here with us he rues
When power o'er all of Siena he dared to seek.
Thus he has moved and moves without a truce
Since his death-day: to all who seek too bold
An aim on earth, here this amend accrues."
And I: "If all the spirits who withhold
Repentance until life to its edge is spun
Remain below and do not join this fold
—Except through help of holy orison—
Till their life's time again is courséd there,
Leave to come up with you how has he won?"
He answered: "When his days most glorious were,
All thoughts of shame he held in great disdain
Fixing himself in Siena's open square.

136 And there, to save his friend from grievous pain
Which in the jail of Charles he must endure,
He brought himself to shake in every vein.

139 No more: I know my words are now obscure
But to this text a comment all too clear
Thy neighbors will for thee quite soon assure.

142 This deed released his soul from that frontier."

Line 1—God is said to be "in Heaven" because He shows there more of his love for the "First Effects" or creatures (the Heavens and the Angels).

12—With their wills.

31, etc.—The souls in Purgatory may pray for those still on earth: but only prayers and good deeds of the living may help them—provided the disposition to help "springs from good root", h. e. from a soul already in the grace of God.

58—Omberto, of the Aldobrandeschi family, Counts of Santa Fiora, near Siena; his father had been called "great". He was killed in the castle of Campagnatico in an assault against him by the Sanese.

63—Our common earthly origin.

79—Oderisi of Gubbio, famous "illuminator" or artist in miniatures.

82—Franco from Bologna, former pupil of Oderisi's.

94—Cimabue, Master of the Primitives, about the middle of the XIII century. Giotto was a pupil of his.

97—Guido Guinicelli and Guido Cavalcanti, Tuscan poets contemporaries of Dante's.

99—Possibly Dante refers to himself here.

105—Forms of "baby-talk" in the Tuscan language—still used today.

116—The sun.

124—Siena was governed as a republic, but often ruled by an oligarchy.

133, etc.—Provenzano begged in the public square of Siena to pay the ransom of a friend, a war-prisoner of Charles of Anjou.

139—Dante did not yet know what it meant to be a beggar.

CANTO XII

ARGUMENT

Still on the cornice of Pride, Dante observes on the pavement of it sculpted examples of punished pride. He and Virgil reach the passage leading to the next cornice and at the entrance of it an Angel erases the first "P" from the poet's forehead.

Abreast we went, I and that spirit bowed
Under his load (thus oxen pull their yoke)
While by my Teacher was that gait allowed.
But when "Leave him and move ahead" he spoke—
"Because to speed their bark here all must strain
With utmost spread of sails and force of stroke,"
Erect, as proper 'tis to walk, again
I made myself, but curbed was my mind's flight
While lessened were my thoughts and seemed to wane.
I had moved on and followed, willing quite,
My Master's steps; and now our rapid tread
Already showed how both of us were light.
"Turn down thy eyes"—at once to me he said—
"To lighten this hard road, it will be well
Thou see'st what here makes for thy plants a bed."

As o'er the dead, to keep more durable
Their memory on earth, gravestones oft bear
Sculptures which of their life the story tell—
Whence people oft are moved to crying there,
As of remembrance the keen prick is felt
By which the pious only are spurred to prayer—
Such figures I saw there; though these excelled
All earthly art—engraved upon that space
From the mount's flank which forms a level belt.
There him I saw who noblest of his race
Had been created, falling from the skies
(Upon one side) leaving a lightning's trace.
There Briareus: opposite he lies
Transfixéd by the spear from heaven thrown,
Heavy on the earth in his death mould of ice.
There, too, Thymbraeus, Pallas, Mars, are shown
Around their father, still in armor clad
Viewing the Giants' limbs, about bestrown.
There Nimrod, too, who looked amazed and sad
At the great structure's foot: on those he stared
Whom pride at Sennaar with him made mad.
O Niobe, in thy eyes what sorrow glared
As sculpted on that road thou seemedst to rue
Twice seven children none of whom death spared!
O Saul, by thy own weapon piercéd through
How there thou loomedst, death-still in Gelboé
Which afterwards no more felt rain or dew.
O mad Arachne, well I could see thee
Half spider grown, and sad—upon the torn
Rags of the work thou wovest so unhappily.

CANTO XII

O Rehoboam, there thou showest shorn
Of threatening looks; indeed by terror struck
Still unpursued, off in a chariot borne.

It showed, besides, on the hard pavement's rock
The price that Alcmaeon's mother had to pay
For the gift of the jewels of ill luck.

It showed the ruthless sons who pressed to slay
Sennacherib who stood before the God
And how by them left lifeless, there he lay.

It showed the ruin and the gory flood
Tamyris caused, when she to Cyrus said:
"Blood thou hast thirsted, I fill thee with blood."

It showed the Assyrians while they routed fled
Soon after Holophernes had been slain:
The remnants of the slaughter there were spread.

Troy I saw, in wreck and ashes lain;
O Ilion how there I saw thee vile
And base, as from thy image 'tis made plain!

What master ever was of brush or style
Who could limn lines and shadows such as there
Defy of human craft the subtlest wile?

Dead seemed the dead and quick the quick; whoe'er
Saw the true deeds, no clearer sight has seen
Than that gi'en me as onward, bent, I fare.

Now swell with pride, and on with haughty mien,
Children of Eve: keep not your sight inclined
Lest you may see how is your path unclean.

More of the mountain we had left behind
And more of the sun's journey we had spent
Than might have reck'd my not unfettered mind,

When he who moved, fore'er ahead intent:
"Lift up thy head"—to me began to say—
" 'Tis time no longer to proceed so bent.
See there an Angel who to make his way
Towards us stands ready: see that having borne
Her service, the sixth maid has left the day.
Thy looks and acts with reverence adorn
That, by his pleasure, higher we may reach.
Think, ne'er again this day will see its morn."
Oft I had heard his warnings meant to teach
That time be never lost; now, as the same
His subject was, dark could not be his speech.
And now toward us the beauteous creature came:
His face, above a white habiliment
Shone as at morning a star's trembling flame.
He oped his arms, his wings he showed distent:
"Come"—he then said—"near, you shall find the stair
And henceforth easy enough shall be the ascent.
To hear these words come travelers quite rare:
O human race, born to fly heavenward,
Why shouldst thou fall at a brief gust of air?"
He led where in the rock a cleft is bored;
Here o'er my brow his wings beat as a fan,
Then a safe journey promised me his word.
As on the right, past Rubaconte's span,
Is reached the church that seated on the hill
Thence overtops the well-directed One,
And broken is the climber's eager will
By the stairway which such an age recalls
When counting-books and measures were safe still—

Thus slackened is the coast which therein falls
In a steep slope, down from the upper round;
But on both sides press close the towering walls.
We turned within and heard some voices sound:
BEATI PAUPERES SPIRITU, and so
Pleasant, that words to tell it are not found.
How different those straits from those below
In Hell! One enters here amidst the strain
Of song, but there amidst wild shrieks of woe.
As up the holy steps we clomb, again
More lightness by my body seemed achieved
Than I had felt before upon the plain.
Therefore I spoke: "Of what great load relieved,
Master, am I, that, going, almost none
Is now the weariness by me received?"
He answered: "When the "P's" still left upon
Thy brow, howe'er their trace is now but slight,
Will be, as one already, wholly gone,
Shall by good will thy feet be mastered quite
And they not only shall all faintness flout
But being upwards pushed shall prove delight."
Then I became as he who goes about
With something on his head that he knows not
But signs of others raise in him a doubt:
Then, to make sure, the hand to help is brought,
Which seeks and finds—that service rendering
That vainly from the sight would have been sought.
My hand outspread up to my brow I bring
And find six letters still, which had been seared
By the key-bearer, and in noticing
Such act, my Leader quite amused appeared.

Line 9—The effect of humility.

25—Lucifer.

27—On one side of the roadbed.

28, etc.—Refers to the war of the Giants against the Gods. Briareus had a hundred arms.

34—Nimrod built the Tower of Babel on the plain of Sennaar.

37—Boasting of her many children, Niobe was slain by Latona, who had only two (from Jove).

40—David cursed the hills of Gelboè, after Saul's death, and they became arid.

43—Losing in a contest of skill against Minerva, Arachne—a skilled weaver—was transformed into a spider, her unfinished work being torn to pieces.

46—Successor to Solomon; threatening a more severe rule, he was overthrown by the people's rebellion.

49—Eriphyle, in consideration of the gift of a famous necklace, revealed the hiding place of her husband Anphiaraus who then died in the Trojan war. Alcmaeon, their son, killed his mother in revenge.

53—In the Temple of Ninive.

56—Queen of Scitia; made prisoner in battle Cyrus King of Persia and filled his mouth with molten gold.

59—By Judith.

62—Troy, or Ilion, destroyed by the Greeks after the famous ten years' siege.

64—The style used for drawing.

81—The "Hours" figured as maids to the "Day".

96—See Purg. XI, 100.

100, etc.—On the other side of the bridge called Rubaconte (now Ponte alle Grazie) one turns to the right to reach the hill church overlooking Florence (the well-directed One) and climbs a long stairway.

110—"Blessed are the poor in spirit"—last warning of humility.

CANTO XIII

ARGUMENT

The Poets have reached the second cornice of the Mountain where penance is done for Envy. Unseen voices cry out inspiring examples of Love. A group of spirits is met and one of them talks to Dante.

The summit we had reached of that staircase
And for the second time a cut we found
About the mount whose climb doth sin efface.
A circling cornice there belts all around
The mountain, equal to the first, below,
But that its arc more narrowly is wound.
No sign is here and no relief to throw
A shadow; bare alike, flank and pathway
Naught but a stone of livid color show.
"If for someone to question here we stay"—
Reasoned the Poet—"much is to be feared
That for our choice too long we would delay."
Into the sun with fixéd eyes he peered
And then—of his right side a pivot made —
The left part of his body around he veered.

"O thou sweet light, in whom my trust is laid
Entering this new path, lead us a-right"—
He said—"As needed here, give us thy aid.
Thou givest the world its warmth and colors bright:
If other reason does not else suggest
We must be guided always by thy light."
Upon the margent there we had progressed
As far as haply on earth a mile would prove,
In a brief time, so eager was our quest.
And through the air we felt some spirits move
On wings towards us, but hidden from our view,
Courteously bidding to the feast of love.
And the first voice that rapid past us flew:
VINUM NON HABENT, cried in thundering strain
And went beyond, repeating that anew.
And ere the distance caused it so to wane
That we lost it, another rushed along:
I AM ORESTES, nor did there remain.
—"Oh!"—said I then—"whence have these voices sprung?"
And while I question, lo! a new voice wings
By us and cries: LOVE THOSE WHO DID YOU WRONG.
And my good Master speaks: "This cornice stings
The guilt of envy and by love, therefore,
Are here directed of this scourge the strings.
The curb must utter a contrasting lore;
Thou shalt soon hear of that, to my advice,
Ere of the pardon thou shalt reach the door.
But keenly through this air now fix thy eyes;
Some spirits seated there ahead, in view
Now come, who huddle close against the rise."

46 Thereon my eyes still wider oped I drew
And saw some people with such mantles dressed
Which mingled with the stone, such was their hue.

49 And when we had a while ahead progressed
I heard them cry: "For us, O Mary, pray,
Michael, Peter, all ye Heaven-blest."

52 I think that none walks on the earth today
So hard of heart as not to feel unstrung
Through pity of what before my vision lay.

55 For when I came so close upon that throng
That certainty of their actions could be gained
Great sorrow through my eyes perforce was wrung.

58 In vile sackcloth their members seemed constrained:
Each one of them another shouldering
While the hillside the back of all sustained.

61 Thus do blind men who feel of want the sting
Stand at a Pardon, crying their distress:
Each on another his head lowering,

64 That passers-by may yield to tenderness
Not only for the sound of pleading word
But for the sight which feels the pang no less.

67 And as on sightless eyes are vainly poured
Sun beams, thus to the shades I have portrayed
Heavenly light its boon does not accord;

70 Because the brows of all are pierced and made
Fast by an iron thread, as it is done
With savage hawk—his wildness thus allayed.

73 It was for me, methought, a thing to shun
Thus to go, seeing others, yet unseen;
Whence to my Counselor I turned anon.

76 Well knowing what my wordless plea could mean
He waited not for my request and said:
"Speak thou, but let thy speech be wise and lean."

79 Came Virgil at my side with his firm tread
Along the cornice where one might fall out
Since it is not by breastwork garlanded;

82 Upon the other side stood the devout
Shades, and the horrid suture so hard pressed
Their woe, that on their cheeks it flowed without.

85 I, facing them, began: "O creatures blest
With certainty to reach that light supreme
Whose thought alone indwells your yearning breast,

88 May soon be solved by grace the spumes which teem
Over your conscience, so that through—quite clear—
May then descend of memory the stream;

91 Tell—this shall gracious be to me and dear—
Is any soul with you of Latin race?
My knowing haply shall bring it some cheer."

94 —"Brother, we are all citizens, through grace,
Of a true city—one, wouldst say perchance,
Who spent in Italy its pilgrim days."

97 From further on than where I had my stance
Methought such words to me came in reply:
I let them hear my steps in new advance.

100 Then amidst them a shade I happed to spy
Expectant-like. "How so?"—should one enquire:
Like a blind man its chin it lifted high.

103 "Spirit who break'st thee so, but to climb higher"—
I said—"if wast the one who answer gave,
Make known thyself to me, by name or shire."

—"I was from Siena"—it answered—"and I have
The scourings, here, left from my life ill-spent
Crying to Him whom to possess we crave.
Sapia named, but hardly sapient
I was; and others' sufferings and tears
More than my own welfare made me content.
Hark, lest deceitful such my speech appears,
How, as I say, I was by madness swayed
When downward bent the arc was of my years.
My townsmen stood at Colle in camp arrayed
And with their enemies had joined the fight
And for what He then willed to God I prayed.
Routed, into the bitter steps of flight
They turned, and I who looked upon the chase
Above all other joys then felt delight.
So that I lifted up my boastful face
And "Now" I cried to God "I fear thee not—
As did the blackbird for few cloudless rays.
But toward the ending of my life I sought
The peace of God; and penitence not yet
Would have began repay my sinful scot
But that my sorry plight did not forget
Pier Pettinagno in his saintly prayer,
Feeling for me, through charity, regret.
But who art thou who ask'st us to declare
Our former state, and go'st with loosened eye,
As I believe, and speaking drawest air?"
I said:—"Here for lost sight I too shall cry,
"But for brief time, since rather small offense
My eyes have done by looking enviously.

But with much greater fear keeps in suspense
My soul the torment of the lower grot;
Already 'neath that load my shoulder bends."
And she to me: "By whom hast thou been brought
'Mid us, if thy return thou dost expect?"
And I: "By him with me who speaketh not.
And I still live; therefore, O soul elect,
Ask, if somewhere for thee, on my return,
Care'st that I should my mortal feet direct."
She answered: " 'Tis so strange this which I learn
From thee, that of God's love great sign must be.
So let thy prayers for me some favor earn.
I pray, for what is most desired by thee,
Shouldst thou e'er tread the Tuscan soil again
Restore my name among my family.
Find thou my kin among those folks inane
Whom Talamone's hopeless venture thralls;
They waste more hope than when for Diana's vein
They searched; but more will lose the Admirals."

CANTO XIII

Line 16—The Sun is symbol of Natural Law.

27—Love as opposed to envy.

29—"They have no wine"—the words of the Virgin at the marriage of Cana.

33—Orestes proclaimed his identity before Egystus, to be punished instead of his brother Pilades.

36—Quotation from the Gospel.

37, etc.—The strings of this scourge are the examples of Love: the "curb" or restraint, will be taken from contrary incidents of envy punished.

50—The Litanies of the Saints.

62—A day of "Pardon" when special Indulgences are granted to the faithful.

78—"Lean", that is not redundant.

84—Tears came through the eyelids sewn together.

114, etc.—When Sapia, a lady from Siena, was already past middle age (the arc of her years was bent) the Sanese suffered a serious defeat at the hands of the Florentine in a battle before the neighboring town of Colle.

123—A proverb: the blackbird mistakenly thought that spring had come.

128—A man from Siena popularly thought a saint.

151—The Sanese dreamed of maritime power and sank fortunes in building a harbor at Talamone (on the Mediterranean). They had wasted much money, before that, in trying to locate a fancied underground stream which they had named the "Diana".

154—The Admirals: a sarcastic name for the promoters of the naval scheme.

CANTO XIV

ARGUMENT

Still on the second cornice (of Envy) the Poets meet a shade from Romagna who, upon hearing of Dante's birthplace, comments on the towns along the Arno, deprecating also the equally corrupted conditions in Romagna.

—"Who is the one who moves around our hill
And, by death's hand not yet released, has flown
This far and opes his eyes and shuts, at will?"
—"This only I know of him: he's not alone.
Question him thou who closer art, and so
That he may speak, speak thou in kindly tone."
Thus at my right two spirits, bending low
One on the other: their desire intense
For me in their uplifted face did show.
And one began: "O thou whose soul ascends
To Heav'n and still to its mortal body clings
Mercifully comfort us and tell us whence
Thou comest and who thou art. The grace that brings
Thee here, in us such a great wonder pours
As must arise from wholly novel things."

And I: "Through Tuscany unwinds its course
A smallish stream; from Falterona's side
More miles, unsated, running than five scores.
I come with all my person from that tide.
To tell my name words would be vainly spent
Because by fame not yet 'tis loudly cried."
—"If well unto the meat of thy intent
Reaches my mind"—the one who had addrest
Me first, spoke then—"Arno by thee is meant."
The other then to him: "Why has suppress
This man the river's name that bathes his land
As people do of things they most detest?"
The shade to whom was made such a demand
Paid back with this: "I know not that, but fain
Would I that name see from men's language banned.
For, from its starting (where that mountain chain
Cut at Pelorus doth so turgid soar
That but few places past that mark attain)
Down to the point it reaches to restore
What from the ocean waves has sucked the sun
And what with them the rivers seaward pour,
Virtue as an enemy all men there shun
Belike a serpent, through some evil use
That goads their heart, or native malison;
Whence in their nature such a change ensues
To dwellers in that valley desolate
As Circe's pastures were wont to produce.
'Mid ugly pigs, more worthy to satiate
Themselves with acorns than with human food
It first directs its course, in lowly state;

Then, coming down, it finds a cur-like brood
Having, beyond their power, a snarling throat.
It turns from them its snout in scornful mood.

Further it falls; the more its margins bloat
The more it finds the hounds into wolves turned
The most accursed and miserable moat.

And when it has through deeper eddies churned,
Foxes it finds so schooled in fraud's own gear
That any clever trap by them is spurned.

Nor shall I stop for others who may hear;
'Tis well for him if what a spirit true
Unwinds through me, shall to his mind adhere.

Thy grandson comes into my prescient view,
A hunter of those wolves upon the banks
Of the fierce stream, and on them all brings rue.

Their flesh he sells still on the living flanks,
Then kills them like an ancient beast: he takes
Many from life, himself from honor's ranks.

He comes, blood-covered, from the saddened brakes;
He leaves them such that in a thousand years
From now, not yet their former bloom awakes."

As grows perturbed the face of him who hears
Of ills that in the future he must dread—
Whate'er the part whence danger's fang appears—

That other spirit thus I saw (whose head
Was turned to list) grow pallid and dismayed
Soon as it had that warning gatheréd.

The speech of one, the look of th' other shade
Desire to know their name in me had stirred
Whence, mixed with prayers, such a request I made.

Thereon the shade who first addresst his word
To me, began: "Thou crave'st that I bring me
To do thy wish, while mine by thee is slurred:
But since God wills in thee such radiancy
Of grace, I shall be bounteous, none the less:
Guido of Duca I who speak to thee.
My blood with envy blazed to such excess
That to my face a livid hue would leap
But at the sight of others' happiness.
From such ill seeds of mine such straws I reap.
O human race, why must thy heart abide
Where each his ownership unshared must keep?
Rinier this is, the honor and the pride
Of Calboli; but now none is alive
Who to his virtue might an heir provide.
And not only his breed doth not revive—
Twixt Po and mount, the Reno and the marine—
The boon required by science and art to thrive,
But all is full—those boundaries within—
Of poisoned brambles, so that late indeed
By culture could the ground be rendered clean.
Who to Arrigo or Lizio is to succeed?
To Traversaro or to Carpigna? O you
Sons of Romagna, changed to bastard breed!
What Fabbro in Bologna ascends to true
Knighthood? Is in Faenza a Bernard found
Who on a lowly stem so gentle grew?
And if in tears I am, 'twill not astound
O Tuscan, thee: Guido from Prata I see,
Hugolin d'Azzo, in life with us so bound:

Friedrick Tignoso with his company,
The Traversari and Anastagi—and these
Two noble strains have ceased e'en now to be:
The Dames, the Knights, the heartaches, the ease
That love and courtesy were wont excite
Where hearts now revel in gross knaveries.
O Brettinoro, why take'st not to flight
Since from thy walls thy family has withdrawn,
And many houses, to avoid thy blight?
Bagnacaval doth well, who ceased to spawn;
And Castrocar doth ill and Conio worse
Since spawning Counts as those they waste their brawn.
Well the Pagani will do, that fiend of theirs
Once having gone, but not so well, for sure,
That former records may be rendered terse.
O Hugolin, unblemished shall endure
Thy noble name, as none is in thy nest
By whose corruption it might grow obscure.
But go forth, Tuscan, now; within my breast
A lust is not to speak but tears to shed,
So by my region is my mind opprest."
We knew those gentle souls could hear our tread
As we went on, and by their hushed array
Confidence in our road in us was bred.
When we, alone, had gone some further way,
Like lightning seemed that cleaves the airy gloom
A voice which, meeting us, was heard to say:
—"Whoever finds me, let him deal my doom"—
And like a thunder fled—far off to die—
If suddenly it bursts from the cloud-womb.

Hardly some truce our ears had from that cry,
When lo! another clanging voice, whose shock
Like thunder was that follows rapidly.
—"I am Aglauros, who was changed to rock"—
And then, against the Poet's side to lean,
Back, not ahead, some steps I took, awe-struck.
And now, restored all 'round the unstirred serene,
He said: "The galling bit that was, which should
Restrain and keep all men, their bounds within.
But prompt ye are to take the baiting food
And thus pulls you the hook of your old foe:
Whence curb or warning call do little good.
The heavens call to you, and to you show
Their timeless beauty, in their encircling turns;
But you still keep your vision earth-low.
Wherefore He scourges you, who all discerns."

CANTO XIV

Line 17—The Arno which crosses Florence has its source on the Falterona mountain, in the Appennine.

31—Cape Pelorus, in Sicily, would be, but for the Strait, a continuation of the Appennine. Mt. Falterona is one of the highest peaks of that chain.

42—On Circe's islands men were changed into pigs.

43, etc.—Then Arno in its course first finds pigs (the people of Casentine), then curs (the Aretine), then wolves (the Florentine) then foxes (the Pisans).

55—On account of Dante, or perhaps of his fellow-spirit.

58—Fulcieri di Calboli, "Podesta" in Florence (1303) who ruthlessly persecuted an adverse faction (a hunter of those wolves).

78—Dante had not answered the request of his name.

81—A seigneur from Brettinoro in Romagna.

89—Calboli, a castle in Romagna.

92—The boundaries of Romagna: the rivers Po and Reno, the Appennine and the Adriatic.

97, etc.—Arrigo Mainardi, of Brettinoro. Lizio da Valbona, near Bagno. Traversari (Peter), of Ravenna. Carpigna (Guido of the Counts of).

100—Fabbro of the Lambertazzi, from Bologna. Bernardo of Fosco who, born humbly, rose to power in Faenza.

104, etc.—All gentlemen of Romagna noted for their knightly conduct.

112, etc.—The family of the Counts of Brettinoro and many other notable houses were extint. Castrocaro and Conio (other Romagna towns) still had Counts, but unworthy; Bagnacavallo's Counts were extinct.

118—The Pagani family will do better when their present head, Mainardo, (a ferocious ruler) will be dead, but will never be able to redeem their past offenses.

121—Hugolin, of the House of Fantoli: a generous seigneur. His family was extinct.

133—Now come examples of envy punished: these are the words of Cain.

139—Aglauros, envious of her sister Erse, loved by Mercury, was changed into a stone.

143—See preceding Canto, 37-40.

145—The pleasures of the world are the bait offered by the "old foe", the Devil.

CANTO XV

ARGUMENT

On the way to the third cornice (of Wrath) Virgil explains a doubt in Dante's mind; the latter, once the level road is reached, experiences visions of notable instances of meekness. A black smoke comes up to envelop them.

As much as from the starting of the day
To end of the third hour, shows of the sphere
Which always whirls, as children do at play,
This much uncourséd of the sun's career
Showed at this time, before the evening haze;
The Vespers' hour was there, midnight was here.
And struck the middle of my nose the rays,
Since 'round the hill such path we had pursued
That straight against the West was set our pace,
When seemed my forehead with some weight indued
(As from a brilliance greater than before)
And wonder grew from things not understood.
Whence quickly both my hands I raised to press
On edge against my lids, like a sunshade
Which of the visible files off th' excess.

As when a beam in counter course is made
To leap, by water or by mirror checked
(And its ascent is of an even grade
With its descent: and doth so far deflect
From a stone's line of fall, in equal tract—
As both experience and art detect)
Thus there in front of me seemed to refract
Some brilliant light that smote my countenance
So that my eyes fled quickly, thus attacked.
—"What is, sweet father, 'gainst whose power stands
To small avail, the screening of my eyes"—
I said—"and which toward us I feel advance?"
He answered me: "It should not cause surprise
If Heaven's family still blinds thy sight;
Herald is he, who calls to the next rise.
Soon it shall be that filléd with delight
Thou shalt gaze on such things—and not distressed—
As far as nature grants thy sense finite."—
And when we stood close to the Angel blest:
"Enter"—he spoke this joyous antiphon—
"Upon this stair which easier is to breast."
We climbed then on—from there already gone—
And BLESSED BE THE MERCIFUL we heard
Sung at our rear: REJOYCE THOU WHO HAST WON.
All by ourselves, I and my Leader spurred
Our upward steps: I thought, while thus we went,
That I might gain some profit from his word;
And turned to him, I posed this argument:
—"When that soul from Romagna, there below
Said "ownership unshared" what was then meant?"

And he: "His greatest sin he came to know
Source of such harm—no wonder should arise
If he warns you, to check its power for woe.

But while such things your heart's desire entice
—Things shrinking when to many a share is given—
Envy is the bellows which blows forth your sighs.

But if the love of the supernal heaven
Should to the goal above direct your aims
By such a fear your heart would not be riven.

Up there, the more each one " 'tis mine" proclaims
The more each one possesses of that good
And more within that cloister burn love's flames."

—"Now my contentment lacks e'en more of food
Than had I held my tongue before"—I said—
"My mind has gathered doubts in larger brood.

How can it be that good distributed
Should make more owners richer from its store
Than if by few it were possessed, instead?"

And he to me: "Because on mortal lore
And only on that, is still affixed thy wit
Thou pluckést darkness from true light's own core.

That Good ineffable and infinite
Dwelling on high, so quick to love doth flow
As sunbeam comes to body brilliant-lit.

As much of ardor as He finds, e'en so
He gives Himself: as wide as love extends
Eternal worth comes upon it to grow.

More souls in heaven—one to another friends—
More good for them to love, more love is there:
As mirrored lights, thus each to each resplends.

If after this thou crave'st still other fare
Thou shalt see Beatrice, and then fulfilled
This and all else thou crave'st shall be by her.
But strive that as two scars already are healed,
So be the five that still thy forehead frieze;
And by repentant grief they can be sealed."
I meant to say: "My mind is quite at ease"—
When we arrived at the next circling plane
And, eager to look on, I held my peace.
As I imagined, there my mind was ta'en
Up in ecstatic, sudden vision,
And people I could see within a fane,
And I could hear a woman speak, upon
The entrance, in a mother's gracious wise:
"Wherefore hast thou done so to us, my son?
I and thy father have, with many sighs,
Sought after thee"—and when this voice was spent
What I had seen at first fled from my eyes.
Another woman came, her cheeks besprent
With the salt waters which through grief flow down
When to some great despite is found a vent.
She spoke: "If thou art master of the town
Whose name the Gods with such long quarrels chose
And which all sciences with their glory crown,
Revenge thyself, Pisistratus, on those
Arms that our daughter boldly dared embrace."
Gracious and meek he seemed her wish oppose
Answering her with mildness on his face:
"What shall we do to one of ill desire
If we condemn who so his love displays?"

CANTO XV

A crowd then showed, ablaze with anger's fire
Pelting with stones a youth, and came the cry
"Strike him to death!"—from them, still higher and higher.
And him I saw, while in his agony
O'ercome he saggéd down to earth (but e'er
His eyes were doors that opened to the sky)
Praying to the High Lord, in such warfare,
For pardon on his foes; methought none could
Have heart of pity and his aspect bear.
When came my mind out of such dreams and view'd
The things which have outward reality
My not false errors then I understood.
My Leader spoke—he could well notice me
Acting as man who doth with sleep's bonds wrest—
"Thou hardly stand'st upright, what troubles thee?
Thou hast for half a league and more progressed
With veiléd eyes and gait so hesitant
As would a man by wine or sleep oppressed."
"O my sweet Father"—answered I—"do grant
Thy hearing: I shall tell what held my gaze
When my foot wavered on uncertain plant."
"Hadst thou a hundred masks upon thy face"—
He said—"thy cogitations unocclused
Would be to me, however small their trace.
Such sights hadst thou, to make it unexcused
To shut thy heart against the influence
Of peace from the eternal springs diffused.
My query: "What troubles thee"—had other sense
Than that of one who looks with eyes that lack
Sight when the soul out of the body ascends.

I asked, to speed thy feet upon this track.
Thus must be spurred the sluggards who are slow
To use their wakefulness when it comes back."
We then proceeded: far as eye could go
Forward intent across the vesper sky
Against the evening sun's translucent glow.
When lo! by slow degrees a smoke rose high
Coming toward us and, like the night, obscure:
Nor there was place where we from it could fly.
That took away our sight and the air pure.

Line 1—As much of the celestial sphere (whirling—according to the Ptolemaic system) shows after three of the six morning hours, that much was still left to be covered by the sun: three hours.

6—The Vespers' hour in Purgatory, midnight in Italy.

7—The rays—of the Sun.

45—See Purg. XIV, 87.

46—Envy.

49—Material things of the world.

55—The more spirits possess God in Heaven, the more joy is given to all.

69—God comes to anyone who loves Him as a beam of light comes, and quite visibly, to a lucid body.

70—He gives of Himself in proportion to the love felt for Him; Grace (Eternal Worth) extends in proportion to that love.

90—The words of Mary in finding the Infant Jesus in the Temple.

97—The wife of Pisistratus, ruler of Athens (so called after a long strife among the Gods) was appealed to by his wife to punish a youth who had embraced their daughter.

106—The martyrdom of Saint Stephen.

121—The "league" was a measure of road distance.

132—The eternal springs of God's goodness.

134—Human eyes lose their power with the passing of the soul.

CANTO XVI

ARGUMENT

Dante proceeds, leaning on Virgil, through the smoke of the third cornice (of Wrath); a shade speaks to him explaining certain grave moral matters. It touches also on political subjects and on the perversity of the times.

Darkness of Hell and night where 'neath a lean
Heaven not even a star's light resplends
And clouds unfold their most tenebrious screen
Made never for my sight a veil so dense
Such as the cover by that smoke o'erlaid,
Nor such a hair-like prickling for my sense,
And to keep oped my eyes I vainly essayed.
Whereon my Escort wise and often tried
Came close and of his arm offered the aid.
As sightless man who steps after his guide
To keep the path and to avoid what may
Hurt him or haply a deadly chance provide;
Thus trough that bitter air and foul, my way
I made and to my Leader harked, who spoke
Urgently: "See from me thou dost not stray."

Voices I heard and each seemed to invoke
(Praying for mercy and for pardon's grace)
The Lamb of God who lifts of sin the yoke.
Ever with "AGNUS DEI" began their phrase;
One was their word and was their measure one
So that full concord seemed them all embrace.
"From spirits must I hear this orison,
Master"—I said. And he: "Thy thought is true;
And here of anger is the knot undone."
—"And who art thou, our smoke thus cutting through
And speaking of our plight in quite the way
One parting time by calends still, would do?"—
This from their midst a voice I heard to say;
Whereon: "Answer and ask"—advised my Guide—
"If hence a pass doth further up convey."
And I: "O soul who here art purified
To go to Him by whom wast life-endowed,
Wonder shalt hear, if keep'st with me thy stride."
"I shall come after thee, far as allowed"—
The answer was—"and ears will keep us well
Conjoined, if sight prevents this smoky shroud."
Then I began: "Still dwelling in that shell
That death dissolves, I move on this ascent
And here I came across the woes of Hell.
If God holds me in such envelopment
Of grace, that He wants me to see his court,
In manner past all modern precedent,
Hide not what was, ere death, thy worldly sort,
And tell if rightly to the pass I go:
And so thy words our journey shall escort."

CANTO XVI

"A Lombard I, Marco by name: to know
The world I strove and dear was to my heart
That worth for which all now hold loose their bow.
To make the climb thou movest in the right part"—
He answered thus, then added: "Pray for me,
I pray thee, when above this summit art."
And I to him: "I bind me faithfully
To do what ask'st, but now to burst I fear,
Filled with a doubt, unless my mind I free.
Single it was but now is born is peer
Out of thy sentence which asserts once more
That which I couple, both elsewhere and here.
Indeed the world, of every virtue of yore
Is now bereft—thy words sound rightly so;
With malice brimmed it is and covered o'er.
But I pray thee the cause of this to show,
That I see it and tell the world, for some
The heavens blame, some place it here below."
Deep sigh, as if he were by woe o'ercome,
First he poured forth, then this from him I heard:
"Blind is the world; indeed thou comest therefrom.
By you who live all causes are referred
Still to the heavens as if all you do
With heaven's motion needfully concurred.
If this were so, would be destroyed in you
Freedom of will and then it were not right
To joy for good, for evil deeds to rue.
First movements doth in you Heaven excite;
Not all I say, but e'en if that were said,
Toward good and evil you are given light

And your free will, which may be worried
At first against the heavens waging war,
But conquers all at last, if rightly fed.
To nature higher and force superior
You freely serve: 'tis that which doth create
The mind in you, by heaven not cared for.
Hence if the world is now in such a strait
In you's the cause, in you it must be sought;
I shall, true spy, on this for you dilate.
Comes from the hand of Him who, ere 'tis wrought
Lovingly fondles it—like little maid
Whose childish tears and laughter are unthought—
The soul, quite simple, by no knowledge weighed
Except that, from a joyful Maker sprung,
Toward that which gives it bliss 'tis gladly swayed.
The taste of a small good it feels, ere long:
By that deceived, it strives for such false gain
If not away by guide or bridle swung.
Whence it was meet to establish laws, as rein;
'Twas meet to have a King who might perceive
The tower at least of truth's far off demesne.
The laws exist, but who sets hand to achieve
Their aim? None, for the shepherd who precedes
May chew the cud but doth the hoof not cleave.
Wherefore the world on seeing him who leads
Strike for the good which by it, too, is craved
Naught else requires, but on that only feeds.
Well now can'st see the world so ill behaved
Brings its own fall into such turpitude;
Not nature which in you might be depraved.

106 'Twas wont of Rome, who turned the world to good,
To have two suns which both pathways would light:
The path of God, that by the world pursued.
109 One has now quenched the other, and unite
Are staff and sword in the same grasp; combined
They must ill fare, so bounden by sheer might.
112 Neither, thus joinéd, doth the other mind.
If this thou doubt'st, observe the ripened grain,
For by its seeds a plant will show its kind.
115 Where Adige and Po traverse the plain
Valor was found and courtesy sincere
Ere Friedrick did his quarrel entertain;
118 But through that land now finds his way quite clear
Whoever would, through shame, leave speech aside
With virtuous folks, or coming to them near.
121 Still three old men there are through whom doth chide
The ancient age the new; they crave the day
When God will lift them up to better tide.
124 This of Corrado and good Gherardo I say,
And Guido da Castel, he, better named
"The simple Lombard" in the Frenchmen's way.
127 Say then: the Church of Rome for her has claimed
Two powers adverse and deep in mud she lies
And has herself and so her burden shamed."
130 —"My Marco"—I said—"thy speech well satisfies
And I can see why Levi's sons partook
Of no allotment of the wordly prize.
133 But what Gherardo is he, at whom we look
As at a sample of a now spent race
Whose manners this barbarian age rebuke?"

—"Temptation or deceit thy word conveys,
Since, speaking Tuscan"—thus his answer came—
"Of good Gherardo seem'st to hear no praise.
I know him not by any other name,
Save by his daughter, Gaia's. May with you
Be God—our roads no longer are the same.
See now the gleaming that already through
This smoke is shining: stands the Angel near.
I must depart ere comes his light to shew."
Thus spoke the shade and would no longer hear.

CANTO XVI

Line 19—The prayer of the Church: "Lamb of God... give us peace".

27—One who reckons time in the human way, by calends, etc.

46—Marco Lombardo, a gentleman from Venice, a good friend of Dante's.

48—None aim at that nobility, that "worth".

55—Dante's doubt (as to the cause of the world's corruption) was single (one other spirit having deplored the same condition) but another similar doubt arises from Marco's words asserting the same thing which Dante couples with what he heard before (elsewhere and here).

63—Some blame the influence of the heavens, some blame human nature altogether.

73—The Heavens have influence on first human impulses (and not all) but men have the light of reason and free will to choose good or evil; the struggle against celestial influence may be hard at first but free will, strengthened by reason and grace conquers at last.

79—You serve—and freely—only to God, that higher nature and superior force which creates your mind which is not under the care of the heavens.

84—Reporting, as it were, about regions unexplored by the poet.

85—God loves the soul even before creating it.

89—Coming from the bosom of happiness, the soul easily turns to what promises happiness.

91—Wordly happiness.

99—The shepherd (the Pope) possesses the right doctrine but does not practice it. In the A. T. animals for sacrifice had to be cud-chewing cloven-footed, which is interpreted to mean that priests should digest well God's doctrine and should walk steadily in righteousness (a cloven foot affording a better hold).

107—Pope and Emperor.

115—Main rivers of Lombardy and Venice.

117—Before the quarrel between Friedrick II and the Pope.

124—Corrado of Palazzo, from Brescia; Gherardo, seigneur of Treviso; Guido, of the family ruling in Reggio.

131—The priestly tribe of Levi was given no land to hold.

140—To identify better that "Gherardo", the shade uses the name of his daughter, named Gaia in a sarcastic way as she had a rather bad name.

CANTO XVII

ARGUMENT

The Poets issue from the black smoke surrounding the spirits on the third cornice (of Wrath) while Dante has visions of anger punished. Virgil expounds the philosophy of Purgatory's sevenfold division.

Reader, recall if e'er on Alps the roll
Of fog has come on thee so that thy view
Was such as through its membrane has a mole;
And when the dense and humid vapors grew
Somewhat dilated, then the sun's dim sphere
Began, though feebly yet, to filter through:
And a light effort will, with image clear,
Lead to envisage how I first descried
The sun again—now to its setting near.
Thus, pairing my footsteps with those well tried
Of my good Guide, out of the cloud I passed
Into the rays that now, below, had died.
O powers of fancy! We are often cast
Out of ourselves by you, and give no heed
If all around a thousand trumpets blast,
How are ye moved, but that on sense ye feed?
A light moves you, of heaven's fashioning
Or through a will that makes it downward speed.

19 Now stamped appeared in my imagining
The wickedness of her whose traits transposed
Were in the bird's who most delights to sing;
25 And here my mind was in its innermost
So shut that of whatever it contained
No aspect outwardly was seen disclosed.
28 That after, in my heightened fancy rained
One crucified, in raging attitude
And scornful mien who thus, till death, remained.
28 The great Ahasuerus by him stood,
Esther his bride and the just Mardocai
Whose word and deed the sternest right pursued.
31 And when this image had dissolved away
Of its own self, as bubble open blows
Lacking the water 'neath whose veil it lay,
34 A maiden in my vision arose:
"O queen"—she said, while weeping unrestrained—
"Why willed'st thyself from life, in anger's throes?
37 Lest thou Lavina lose, thyself hast slained;
Now thou hast lost me, mother, and I cry,
By thine, ere than by others' ruin, pained."
40 As sleep is broken off, if suddenly
Strikes an unwonted glow our closéd sight—
Broken it darts, not yet ready to die—
43 Thus fell of my imagining the flight
Suddenly broken when upon my face
Brighter than is our custom, struck a light.
46 I turned me 'round exploring the new place
When—"Here one climbs"—'twas said, and all intent
Of mine on other things, those words erase.

And then so eagerly my will is bent
On looking who might be our summoner
That but with finding is its ardour spent.
But as unto the sun—whose heavy glare
O'erwhelms our sight and by excess a veil
Makes to itself—my power was failing there.
"Spirit divine is this, our upward trail
Showing to us, and waits not till we pray,
And hides itself within its radiant pale.
As man with self will do, such is his way.
Who sees the need and waits the begging suit
With heart malign already thinks his nay.
Let to such bidding be conformed our foot.
Let us strive on, ere evening grows too dim:
Then, till new day, is closed our upward route."
Thus spoke my Leader and, abreast of him,
Upon the fronting stair my steps I turned.
And soon I felt, when on the lowest rim,
Like a wing flapping, and the air seemed churned
Over my face and "Blesséd are"—one said—
"The meek in whom no evil wrath has burned."
Already had so risen overhead
The waning rays which coming night pursues
That here and there a star's light colouréd.
"Oh, why, my strength, seem'st thou from me to ooze?"
Wordlessly I spoke as I felt coming o'er
The sinews of my legs a slacking truce.
We had now reached where the staircase no more
Kept climbing up and we stood there, footbound,
Belike a ship when it has reached the shore.

A while I waited list'ning for a sound,
On this new shelf, that might my sense assault;
I spoke then, turning to my Master 'round:
"Pray tell, my gracious father, what default
The souls upon this tier are purging for?
If our feet stay, let not thy sermon halt."
And he to me: "Herein the souls restore
The love of good that slacked in its pursuit;
Here stirs itself the ill-belated oar.
But mind me now: for thee I shall dilute
This point in plainer words, and so shall bear
Our tarrying, for thee, some worthy fruit.
Nor creature nor creator ever were
Without some love, my son"—'gan his address—
"Inborn or willed; thou art of this aware.
The first, from nature, e'er is errorless;
May err the other by a wrongful aim
Or by too great or by too little stress.
While well it heeds of the first goods the claim
And to the second gives their proper dues,
In none of its delights is aught to blame.
But if it turns to evil, or pursues
The good with more or less than just intent,
It doth the creatures 'gainst the Maker use.
From this must now to thee be evident
Love is the seed of ev'ry virtue in you
And of all acts that call for punishment.
And now, since love cannot but keep in view
Always what spells its subject's happy estate,
No thing will ever for self-hatred rue.

And since cannot be thought love separate
(Much less self-standing) from the Primal One:
Toward it, no passion can be joined with hate.
If my distinction then is rightly done
Loved evil is the neighbor's: the three ways
This love grows in your slime we now shall con.
There are who hope advance through the disgrace
Of neighbors: that alone makes them aspire
That others fall from high to lowly place.
Some, of their power—if others should rise higher—
And of their honor, fame and grace, despair
And grief gives birth to contrary desire.
Some, it would seem, a spurn illy can bear
And greedily by them revenge is craved:
Such must to others evil turns prepare.
This threefold love, below, by tears is laved:
Know now about the other, seeking ends
Quite proper but in ordinance depraved.
Each one a good confusedly apprehends
And seeks, which to the soul is restful port;
Wherefore to reach thereto each one contends.
If seeking sight of it, the love falls short—
Or in its quest—after just shriving, this
Is the set place where you are punished for't.
Void of true joy another good there is:
It is not happiness, 'tis not the fair
Essence, the root and fruit of ev'ry bliss.
The love which gives itself in wasteful share
To it, above is wept in triple round:
But how its threefold kind discerns a reasoner
I shall not say: thyself shalt search that ground."

Line 3—The membrane which covers a mole's eyes.

13-18—Fancy creates its images out of sense-material; but also through a light of the heaven's own making (celestial influence) and also through a light which the will of God sends into a human mind.

20—Procne, to revenge herself on her husband caused him to eat their own child: she was changed into the nightingale. (Dante follows this version of the myth).

26—Aman, who in his anger had tried to have Mardocai executed.

34—Lavina, daughter of Amata, was to be given in marriage to Aeneas. Amata, disappointed and angry at the course of events, hanged herself.

39—Refers to the death of Turnus to whom Lavina had been promised.

42—Image taken from serpent whose body still darts even if broken.

58—One is quick to work to one's own advantage.

67—The Angel erases the third "P" from Dante's forehead and repeats, with some variation, words from the Sermon of the Mount.

73—The approach to the fourth cornice (of Sloth) is here symbolized. "Truce", in the original, must be taken in the sense of "inaction".

91, etc.—All Intelligences are ruled by love, which may be inborn (natural) or elective.

94—Love coming directly from nature cannot go wrong; elective love may sin either by being directed to a wrongful object or, if to the right object, by being out of proportion—too strong or too weak.

97—If love seeks spiritual goods (the first goods) and does not exaggerate in his seeking after the material goods (the second) no sin is incurred.

106—It is certain that love cannot but seek the happiness of its subject: of the one from whom it emanates.

109—No love of Creature can be apart from the Primal Love (God) and no human passion can include a hate toward God.

112—One cannot hate oneself and cannot hate God—therefore the only evil that may be sought—"loved"—is the neighbors' evil. And this may happen in three ways, through Pride (115), Envy (118), Anger (121).

130—In the quest for good one may lack proper zeal, hence in the fourth cornice of Purgatory are cleansed the remnants of Sloth.

133—One may seek after other kinds of "good", permissible, though not giving true happiness. If immoderate, that search for good becomes sinful; hence the threefold upper division of Purgatory: Avarice, Gluttony, Lust.

CANTO XVIII

ARGUMENT

Still on the fourth cornice (of Sloth). Virgil explains more fully the question of moral impulses and free-will. A band of souls, slothful in their world life, passes by the poets and one of them speaks to Dante.

Having concluded thus his argument
The noble Doctor with a fixéd eye
Sought in my aspect if I seemed content.
And, smarting with new thirst for knowledge, I
Outwardly speechless, spoke within: "Perchance
Weary of my questioning he feels well nigh."
But that true father, who perceived at once
My timid will locked in self-forgéd chains,
Speaking, my speech appeared to countenance.
"Master"—said I—"My sight a power obtains
From thy enlightment to discern quite clear
All that imports thy reason, or explains.
Wherefore to me, I pray, sweet father dear,
Unfold that love of which thou hast implied
That all good works and ill fall in its sphere."

"Turn then toward me"—he answered—"thy keen eyed
Intellect and shall soon be evident
The errors of the blind who want to guide.
The soul which is to love, from nature, bent
Easily is moved to all alluring things
When stirred to act by their inveiglement.
Your apprehension draws from outward things
Its images which inward it displays
So that to them your soul it turns and swings.
If, turned, the soul bent to the image stays,
That bend is love, 'tis Nature that contrives
Again, through pleasure, you and her to lace.
Then as the fire which always upward strives
Because its form is fashioned to ascend
There, where its matter longer life derives,
The soul, so bound, responds to a certain trend
(A motion spirital) and ne'er will pause
Till on the lovéd things it finds joy's end.
Now thou can'st see how hidden are the laws
Of truth from people who hold it as true
Each love to be without vitiating flaws;
Because one might perhaps its matter shew
Good in each case, yet might the wax be apt
While otherwise the sign impressed thereto."
"Thy words in which my mind is so enwrapped
Have love resolved for me"—I answered thus—
"But now I am by graver doubtings trapped.
For, if from outward, love is offered us
And with no other foot proceeds the soul
It merits naught, if straight or tortuous."

46 "I shall"—said he—"help thee far as the goal
Of reason; further on thou must needs wait
For Beatrice: that is faith's own role.

49 Each form substantial, which is separate
From matter—yet united still therein—
Has in itself a special virtue innate

52 Which is not felt but when its act is seen,
And its effect is its sole evidence;
As life in plant is shown by sprouting green.

55 Hence how it happens that man apprehends
First notions, 'tis not given him to learn,
Nor how the affection springs in you that bends

58 To first impulses; as of bees that yearn
For making honey; hence this primal bent
Holds no deserts of either praise or spurn.

61 That others be, to this, equivalent
A virtue innate in you gives apt advice
And that must guard the threshold of assent.

64 The principle is this, then, in which lies
Cause of your merits, as by it are ta'en
And winnowed, righteous loves and loves unwise.

67 Those who have reached the end of reason's chain
Have recognized this native liberty;
Hence in the world, for them, Morals remain.

70 Should we then say that of necessity
Springs any love that within you may flare
Still to withstand or follow you are free.

73 Beatrice calls that noble Arbiter
"Freedom of will"; let not thy memory fade
Upon this point should she to this refer."

The moon that had till near midnight delayed
Caused all the stars for us more faint to shine—
Like splitted log all blazing it was made—
And moved against the heavens, on the line
Blazed by the sun when Romans may descry
'Twixt Corsica and Sardinia its sphere decline.
But from that noble soul through whom sounds high
Pietola more than Manto's very place
The load imposed by me had dropped; and I
Having obtained in clear and open phrase
The reason on the questions I had posed
Stood like a man absorbed in sleepy haze.
But took from me this languor a great host
Back of our shoulders looming suddenly
Who 'round the turn on us already closed.
Ismenus and Asopus once could see
Such fury and press, at night, along their tide
When Thebans needed Bacchus' ministry,
As 'round that cornice there incurve their stride
(For what I saw of that oncoming cloud)
Those whom just love and eager yearning ride.
Soon upon us they were: the mighty crowd
Together moved and rushéd on a-main
While two ahead, while weeping, shouted loud:
"Mary did run with haste, the hill to gain"—
And: "Caesar, that Ilerda he might reduce
Struck at Marseilles, then hurried on to Spain."
"Move fast, move fast, lest precious time we lose
For want of love"—cried after them the rest—
"May zeal for good, fresh grace in us infuse."

—"O you in whom the present fervid quest
Haply fills out the slackness and delay
Once put in goodly deed by lukewarm breast,
This man who lives—no untruth indeed I say—
Seeks to go up, soon as will shine the sun;
Tell us therefore where opens up a way."
These were the words my Leader spoke, and one
Among the spirits answered: "Come"—he said—
"After, and thou shalt find the bore anon.
So filled we are with zeal to move ahead
That we cannot repose; forgive us then
If by our justice villainy seems bred.
I ruled San Zeno in Verona, when
Good Barbarossa held the Empire, for whom
Still in Milan mourns every citizen.
And one already a foot has in his tomb
Who shall quite soon that monastery rue
Sorry that there the power he did assume,
Because his son, of body badly askew
And worse of mind, and illy born, he set
Lord o'er the place that claimed its pastor true."
Whether he ceased or he was speaking yet
I know not, as he rushed far past our sight,
But this I heard and pleased not to forget.
Then he who succored me in every plight
Said: "Turn this side and see those coming twain
Who seem on their own slothfulness to bite."
Last of all shades they cried: "By death first ta'en
The people were for whom had oped the sea,
Ere Jordan saw the heirs to its domain.

And those who could not bear the asperity
Unto the ending, with Anchises's son—
Resigned themselves to live ungloriously."
Then, when so far apart from us were gone
Those shades, so that they could be seen no more,
Another thought was in my mind bespun.
And this so many and divers others bore
And from one thought to another I so ranged
That in this reverie a mist came o'er
My eyes and thinking into dreaming changed.

CANTO XVIII

Line 9—Virgil spoke and thus seemed to approve of Dante speaking.

14—Explain fully.

19—"Love" in this connection means a "disposition toward", a "desireful inclination."

22—Man's apprehension draws images from external reality and displays such images to the intellective soul which then is turned to those external things, as presented in image.

25—Nature binds herself to man, first through his mere apprehensive power, and again through the pleasure (love) with which the human soul adheres to things.

28—Fire tends toward the Sphere of Fire where it is more durable.

31—The soul, bound as shown above (25), tends to the realization of its desire for the thing loved.

38—That is, the love-impulse may be blameless but the thing loved may be wrong.

43—If the soul is attracted from outside objects and acts only through such attraction, its acts are indifferent, whether right or wrong.

49, etc.—Intellectual axioms, or instinctive impulses are "innate": no blame or merit attaches to first movements of the soul toward any object.

61—In order that other movements be "equivalent" to this primal bent"—partake of its quality of not being blameworthy—a "virtue innate", a "principle" is in you (free-will) able to distinguish between the kinds of "love."

64—Conscience and free-will.

78—A line uncertain in the original.

79—It moved from West to East: from Rome the sun is seen to set between the islands of Corsica and Sardinia during the winter solstice.

82—Virgil was born at Pietole, near Mantua. Dante's doubts had been a burden to him.

91—When the Thebans invoked Bacchus' aid such furious crowds (of excited worshippers) were seen along the two rivers mentioned.

100, etc.—Examples of well directed haste: the Virgin Mary hurrying on her visit to Elisabeth; Caesar's march.

117—Our righteous hurrying may seem unkind to thee.

118—San Zeno, a famous Abbey. Barbarossa: Friedrick Redbeard; Milan mourns for the ruin Friedrick had brought upon it.

121—Albert della Scala, Seigneur of Verona (died shortly after the supposed time of this meeting) will regret that he made Abbot of that monastery a bastard of his, deformed of mind and body.

133—Sloth punished: the Jews lukewarm in following Moses all died before reaching the promised land; the Trojans who abandoned Aeneas on his journey to Latium, were lost in obscurity.

CANTO XI

CANTO XIX

ARGUMENT

Proceeding on the fourth cornice (of Sloth) Dante has a vision symbolic of the sensual pleasures with which the three remaining tiers are concerned. Fanned by the Angel, he enters the passage to the next cornice where he is spoken to by a former Pope.

It was the hour when is no longer heated
By warmth of day the coldness of the moon
—By Saturn or by Earth perhaps defeated—
And geomancers see the East bestrewn
By Fortune Major, close by dawn pursued,
Climbing a way that will be brighter soon.
A hag limp-tongued, with crookéd eyes, who stood
Distorted on her feet, in dream I saw:
Stumpy her hands, her skin was pallid hued.
I gazed on her and as the sunbeams thaw
The limbs that froze beneath the dark of night,
Thus my regard made active in her jaw
The tongue, and set the woman all upright
In a brief time, while on her face forspent
It brought the color which is love's delight.
And when with ready tongue she could accent
Her words, a song from her began, so feat
That hardly I could from it turn my intent.

19 "I am"—she sang—"I am a Siren sweet
Who in midsea to sailors brings dismay,
Since all who hear are with such joy replete.
22 I turned Ulysses from his wandering way
With my song; all who to my charms are used
Seldom depart, for I their heart allay."
25 Hardly to silence were her lips reduced,
A lady of holy aspect and quick stride
Appeared to me, to make the first confused.
28 "O Virgil, Virgil, who is this?"—she cried
In tone of rage, and he advanced, ne'er bending
His fixéd eyes from that high lady aside.
31 She grasped the other and her garments rending
Oped her in front, her belly showing me:
The stench from it made to my sleep an ending.
34 I turned, while spoke good Virgil: "At least three
Times I have called: arise and come, to find
The passage here that may be oped to thee."
37 I rose; already all the tiers that bind
The holy mount shone with the day's full flame;
Going, we had the novel sun behind.
40 Following him I bent my brow, the same
As man by heavy thinking wearied
Who bends, like half a bridge's arch, his frame.
43 When: "Come, here is the pass"—I heard it said
With voice in which a soothing kindness beamed
Ne'er known in lands where are the mortals bred.
46 With wings oped wide—and like a swan's they gleamed—
He who had spoken showed the upward trace
Cut in the rock twixt walls that the pass seamed.

CANTO XIX

He stirréd then his wings and fanned our face
Asserting those "QUI LUGENT" to be blest
For of all comfort they shall have the grace.

—"What troubles thee that e'er to earth depressed
Thou keepst thy sight?"—began to say my Guide,
While past the Angel shortly we had progressed.

And I:—"I move with such a cautious stride
For I am drawn, e'en now, by freshly unrolled
Vision whose sight I cannot cast aside."

—"Saw'st thou"—he said—"that enchantress of old
Who alone, above, the eyes to sorrow unseals?
Saw'st thou how man is loosened from her hold?

Enough of that: plant firm on earth thy heels,
Thy sight turn upwards where the Eternal King's
Rotating lure moves the great, ceaseless wheels."

As hawk looks at his feet, then quickly swings
Toward where the call came from, and to obtain
The food desired, thereto his body flings,

Such I became, and such, far as the lane
Cut in the rock allows the climb, I went
Till one must take the circling path again.

As I debouched into the fifth enceinte
A weeping crowd I saw that never stirred,
All on the ground with downward face distent.

"ADAESIT PAVIMENTO"—this I heard—
"ANIMA MEA"—amidst such piercing sighs
That in our ears the words would sound half-blurred.

—"O ye, elect of God, whose penalties
Justice and hope render less hard to endure,
Direct our steps where higher we may rise."—

—"If you, who come, from lying are secure
And sooner wish to have your way revealed,
Keep e'er your right to the outside contour."
When thus the Poet had to them appealed,
Such answer came—from me shortly in advance—
And showed the speech what else was there concealed;
Wherefore to my Lord's eyes I turned my glance
And with a joyful sign he gave assent
To what desired my wistful countenance.
Then, free to follow, as I pleased, my bent,
I moved and stood above that creature, where
The spoken words had first made me intent,
Saying:—"O soul whose tears to flowering bear
That, which without, man cannot God attain,
Depose a while, for me, thy mightier care.
Who wast, and why with backs upturned so lain
You are , tell me; if there whence, living still,
I came, aught wishest that for thee I gain."—
—"Why but our backs here show, through Heaven's will"—
He answered—"I shall tell, but thou shalt know,
First, that Saint Peter's place I did once fill.
Twixt Sestri and Chiavari comes down the flow
Of a clear stream; the title of my race
To it, as to its fountainhead must go.
Shortly o'er a month I tried how heavy weighs
The mighty robe, if in the mud untrod:
All other loads are plumes that a breath sways.
But late, alas, I turned myself to God,
Only when Pastor o'er the Roman see
I did perceive how life is only a fraud.

I saw uneased the heart's anxiety
E'en there, though higher could climb no human shift;
Whence for this life the love was stirred in me.

Up to that point, a saddened soul, adrift
From God I was, and full of avarice:
For that thou see'st me punished in this rift.

What avarice can do, here patent is
As the converted souls must make amend,
Nor has this mount pain bitterer than this.

Because our sight endeavored not ascend
On high, but to terrestrial things was glued
Sunk in the earth its strength here it must spend.

Because, by avarice, toward every good
Was quenched our love, so that our works were vain,
Upon this soil we are, by Justice, screwed

And feet and hands are fastened by her chain;
Long as it pleases a just Providence
Moveless and stretchéd here we shall remain."

I had knelt down, but as I did commence
To speak, he noted by the sound alone
How bent I was in act of reverence:

"What reason"—he asked me—"has made thee prone?"
And I gave answer: "For your dignity
Conscience would not my standing straight condone."

"Straighten thyself, and stand, brother"—said he—
"Err not: co-servant I with thee, and bound
With all the rest, to one authority.

If thou that holy evangelic sound
Which tells us "Neque nubent" hast learnt well
For my assertion thou canst see the ground.

Go now, by me thou shouldst no longer dwell
Because thy tarrying my tears delays
Which ripen that whereof I heard thee tell.
A niece of mine, Alagia, on earth displays
Virtue in herself; and may she yet withstand
My people's lead into their evil ways.
Save her, naught holds for me the mortals' land."

Line 1—It was about one hour before dawn, the coldest time of the nigh when heat left by the previous day no longer counteracts the col diffused by the moon—being possibly conquered by the cold emana tions of Earth or Saturn.

4—At the supposed season of Dante's journey, the stars of Aquarius an Pisces made in the East—just before dawn—the sign called by astro logers "Fortuna Major."

6—Because the sun will soon rise.

7, etc.—The hag or Siren symbolizes sensual Pleasure, while the "lady o holy aspect" is symbol of holy Pleasure.

50—From the Sermon of the Mount: "those who weep shall be consoled.

59—The three remaining tiers (Avarice, Gluttony, Lust) are concerne with the expiation of sensual pleasures inordinately followed.

62—The wheels of heaven revolved by the Eternal King are like a lur (It. "logoro") calling you. The lure was a rotating contrivance b which a falconer would recall a hawk.

64—The "lure" was often baited with meat.

73—From Psalm 119: "My soul hath cleaved to the pavement"

84—That is, which shade had spoken.

92—The innocence of the soul.

99—Pope Adrian V, who died in 1276, forty days after his election.

100—He was of the Counts of Lavagna, which is a stream between th towns of Sestri and Chiavari on the eastern Riviera (east of Genoa)

111—For a life of penance.

124—The chain of Justice.

137—"They shall not marry, nor be given in marriage"—spoken by Chris answering a query about future life. Such ties shall be dissolved i heaven—even that of a Pope's spiritual marriage with the Church.

141—See line 91.

142—Only from that virtuous niece the spirit could expect some worth prayers.

CANTO XX

ARGUMENT

On the fifth cornice: the prone shades cry out examples of noble poverty. The spirit of Hugh Capet speaks to Dante of the origin and of the exploits of his descendants. Examples of avarice punished. An unexplained tremblor shakes the mountain.

Against a better will 'tis hard to fight,
Hence, 'gainst my wish—to yield to what he chose—
I, from the water, draw the sponge still light.
Along the rock, with me, my Leader goes
On the free spaces, like a man, compelled
By narrow wall, keeps to the merlons close,
Because the shades who through their eyes must melt,
Drop after drop, the ill spread the world o'er
Crowd on the outer edge of that sad belt.
Ancient she-wolf, a curse may Heaven pour
On thee replete, more than all beasts, with prey,
For thy black hunger raging evermore.
O spheres whose turning, as it seems, holds sway
O'er changing of conditions here below,
When will he come who shall drive her away?

While on we kept—our steps were rare and slow—
Watching the shades I felt the piteousness
Of their deep moans and of their tears of woe.
And, shortly ahead, out of the sprawling press
I heard: "Sweet Mary"—in tone as at childbirth
A woman cries out of her great distress.
And after that: "So poor wast thou on earth
As by thy shelter it is shown so plain
Wherein thy holy burden was brought forth."
Then: "Good Fabricius"—came another strain—
"Virtue with poverty by thee was sought
Rather than riches with dishonor's stain."
Such pleasure by these words to me was brought
That I moved farther on to find what shade
Was where the words had sounded—as I thought.
It was still speaking of the bounteous aid
Nicholas gave the maidens in their need
So that their youth would not unhonored fade.
"O soul from whom such noble words proceed,
Tell who thou wast"—I said to it—"and why
Alone renew'st such praise, deserved indeed.
Some guerdon shall not lack thy word, if I
Again shall go to tread the pathway brief
Of human life that to its end doth fly."
And he: "I shall tell thee, not for relief
I hope from there, but because in thee
Resplends such grace, ere turned is life's last leaf.
I was the root of that most evil tree
Whose shadow sicklies o'er all Christian lands:
Good fruit from it is but a rarity.

CANTO XX

But if Douai and Bruges had puissance—
And Ghent and Lille—revenge would wait not long:
This, from the Judge of all, my prayer demands.

Hugh Capet I was called in earthly tongue;
Philips and Louises who held empire
O'er France in recent times, from me have sprung.

I had a Paris butcher for my sire
The time the ancient kings failed in the land
Save one who wore the grey robe of a friar.

I found I held the reins, with a strong hand,
Of the realm's rule; such power of novel gain
I had, and friends in such a mighty band

That my son's head was chosen to sustain
The widowed crown; his was the marrow whence
The sacred bones of those their start have ta'en.

And while the bounteous dowery from Provence
Took not the shame out of my house, at least
It did no ill, if small its eminence.

Then it began, with might by fraud increased,
Its ravages, and after—for amend—
Normandy, Gascony and Poitou it seized.

Charles came to Italy and—for amend—
After he made his victim Conradin
Sent Thomas back to heaven—for amend.

A day I see—and a short time within—
That will call forth another Charles from France
So they be better known, he and his kin.

He comes unarmed, alone, and with the lance
Of Judas' jousts, and that he pushes through
The paunch of Florence which bursts at his hands.

And yet no land to him shall thence accrue
But sin and shame, for him much heavier
Since of that harm he takes a lighter view.

The other, once at sea made prisoner,
I see bargaining for his daughter's price
As with the other slaves might do corsair.

What else can'st do to us, O avarice,
After my house to thee so drawn thou hast
That its own flesh 'tis ready to despise?

That less may seem the future sins and past,
Enter Alagna I see the fleur-de-lys
And in his vicar Christ in prison cast.

I see him suffer new indignity,
The vinegar and gall I see renewed
And his new death, twixt living thieves, I see.

The new Pilate I see, of heart so crude,
Still sated not, and strengthened by no right
The Temple with his greedy sails intrude.

O Lord of mine, when shall I have delight
Seeing thy vengeance which, not now disclosed
Sweet makes thy wrath, screened from created sight?

What of the Lady—whom the Holy Ghost
Chose only bride—I spoke, on which to gain
Some gloss thou turned'st to me: 'tis so disposed

That while our prayers call for that refrain
During all day, a sound quite opposite
We take instead, soon as daylight doth wane.

Pygmalion's story then we must repeat
Who turned to traitor, thief and parricide,
For his gold-hungry breast was ne'er replete.

CANTO XX

The avarice of Midas also is cried:
By what distress his greedy quest was met
Whence will the world's irrision ne'er subside.

We then recall mad Achan: how he set
His thieving hands upon the spoils, and loosed
Joshua's wrath which seems to bite him yet.

Sapphira and her husband are accused;
The kicks are praised which struck Heliodorus,
And 'round the hill in infamy is conduced

Polymnestor who murdered Polydorus.
Then: "Crassus, tell, since thou must surely know,
How tastes gold"—this, lastly cries our chorus.

At times one voice is high, another low
According to the impulse which spurs our song
And now makes fast our pace, now keeps it slow.

But those good acts we mention all day long,
Alone, a while ago, I did not praise
Though hereabout no other voice was strong."

Already we were distant from his place
And while it was allowed, with eager will,
We strove to cover all we could of space.

And then I felt a tremblor of the hill
As of a falling thing: like through man driven
On to the gallows, went through me a chill.

Certainly Delos not so hard was riven
Ere chosen by Latona to provide
A nest to hold the two eyes of the heaven.

Then such a shout arose from every side
That closer to my flank my Master sped
Saying: "Fear not, as I am still thy guide."

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO—they all said
As I could hear the nearer voices, whence
The song's plain meaning could be gathered.
Motionless there we stand and in suspense
As did the shepherds who first heard that strain
Until the tremblor stops and the song ends.
We then take up our holy road again
Watching the souls who lay upon the soil
And had resumed the wailing of their pain.
Never my ignorance stirred such turmoil
In me, and caused such eagerness to know
(Though something here my memory might foil)
As there I had—or fancy told me so—
Nor, for our haste, to stop and ask I dared,
Not aught was there that would an answer show.
Thus thoughtful and alarmed ahead I fared.

Line 1—Dante yields to the better will of the spirit (who spoke to him in the preceding Canto) desirous of going on with his penitence.

5—On the narrow wall of a castle.

10, etc.—See INFERNO I—for the symbol of the she-wolf (Avarice) and of the Hound who is to conquer her.

23—The stable of Bethlehem.

25—Consul Fabricius refused the bribe offered by the enemies of Rome.

32—Bishop (Saint) Nicholas of Bari (Santa Claus) who furnished—incognito—the dowery for three poor young maids so they could be married.

43—The Royal House of France.

46—These Flemish cities rebelled against Philip IV, their army defeating the French at Courtray (1302).

CANTO XX

52, etc.—The posterity of Charlemagne was extinct save for one who lived as a monk. It is not quite clear how the Capets came into power. Hugh's father was not a butcher (perhaps called so for his cruelty) and had held some office.

56—Power from new acquisitions to the old realm.

58—Robert, crowned in 1031.

60—Of the present rulers.

61—The Capets became powerful—and shameless—when, through marriage, they acquired important Provence.

67—Charles of Anjou. After defeating Manfredi, King of Naples and Sicily, he had Conradin (Manfredi's son) executed. Charles was also blamed for the death of Saint Thomas (1274).

71—Charles of Valois (called "Lackland") came to Italy (1301) with a small following, but (73) skilled in traitorous deals.

75—Florence suffered from Charles, sent to pacify her internal strife.

79—Another Charles (first son of Charles of Anjou) was made prisoner in a sea battle. For a price, he allowed his daughter to be married to an Italian prince.

86—Boniface VIII was seized in Anagni (1303) by the soldiery of Philip IV (carrying the Lily of France: fleur-de-lys).

91—This new Pilate (Philip IV) dissolved and robbed the Order of the Knights of the Temple.

97—Answers the query of Dante as to the cry about Mary.

103, etc.—Pygmalion, King of Tyre, a murderer for greed; Midas, at whose touch everything turned to gold; Achan, punished by Joshua for stealing out of the common spoils; Sapphira (Ananias' wife) who lied to Saint Peter; Polimnestor who killed Polydorus for money's sake; Crassus, whose mouth was filled with melted gold.

118, etc.—Explains that spirits cry out in different tones; Dante had heard him alone a while before while acclaiming those heroic acts of poverty, but only because at that time no other voice sounded loud enough in that vicinity.

130—The island of Delos was tossed about by the waves and stood still only when Latona chose to bring forth there her two children, Apollo and Diana (Sun and Moon).

CANTO XXI

ARGUMENT

A shade suddenly springs up and joins the two Poets. It proves to be that of the Poet Statius who explains that he is now free to ascend to Paradise and that the Mountain has trembled for joy at his release.

The thirst, from nature born, which naught allays
Except the draft whereof the woman sought,
At the Samarian well, the healing grace,
Was troubling me, and urged by haste I fought
To make my hampered steps my Leader's fit,
While pitying the pains there justly wrought.
And lo! as Christ—in Luke we find this writ—
To the two travelers appeared of yore
Already uprist from the sepulchral pit,
Thus, from our rear, a shade; upon the floor
The crowd about its feet engaged its view
And we were not aware of it, before
It spoke: "My brothers, be God's grace with you"—
We quickly turned toward him and Virgil bent
In greeting, such as to those words was due;

And then he said: "May the true court consent
Thy reaching to the council of the blest,
That court which rules my timeless banishment."
—"What!"—said the other, while we fast progressed—
"If ye are souls whom God must needs reject
From Heaven, who has helped your upward quest?"
My Doctor spoke: "On him thy sight direct
And see the markings of th' angelic brand,
A proof that he shall reign among th' elect.
But since the pauseless spinner from her wand
Has not yet spun for him the batch thereon
Set and arranged for all by Clotho's hand,
His soul, though sister of us both, alone
Over this climb could not expect to scale
Because its vision does not match our own.
Therefore I came to show to him the trail,
Summoned from Hell's vast jaws—and shall yet show
Until the virtue of my school shall fail.
But tell, if this thou know'st, why shortly ago
So shook the Mount, and why all seemed to cry
At once, up from its bathéd feet below."
His very question hit so clean the eye
Of my desire, that my thirst-parchéd mind
Through hope alone, already seemed less dry.
Began he: "There is naught that—undesigned—
The sanctity of this mountain could affect,
Nor aught may happen here of novel kind.
All power of alteration here is checked:
When heaven in itself receives its own,
As cause of change that is the sole respect.

Here rain or snow or hail is never known
To fall, nor dew nor frost above the entering stair
Composed of the three steps of varied stone.

This sky no clouds o'er-shadow, thick or rare;
No lightning rends, nor Thaumas' daughter spans,
She who doth often change her region there.

Nor can dry vapor in its rise advance
Beyond the topmost step whereof I spake
Whereon the foot of Peter's Vicar stands.

Little or much what is below may shake,
But, through the winds that within earth may hide,
I know not how, ne'er felt was here a quake.

A tremblor comes when, feeling purified,
Rises a soul or further up the hill
It moves: and then the greeting hymn is cried.

The will doth such a purgéd sense instill,
Alone; for now the soul to change its choir
Feels wholly free, and with an active will.

It had such wish, but drowned by the desire
Which God's high justice now draws to the pain,
(As sin drew it of yore) and chills its fire.

And I, who at this suffering have lain
Five hundred years and more, for better place
Just now have felt a will bound by no chain.

Hence thou hast felt the tremblor and the praise
Which through the mount the spirits have addressed
To that High Lord, who may them soon up-raise."

Thus he; since one whose thirst is saltiest
The greatest pleasure in the draft enjoys,
How I was gladdened cannot be expressed.

And my wise Guide: "I see what net destroys
Your motion's freedom; how comes the release,
Why quakes the mount and common joy you voice.
Now tell who wast, if this to thee may please,
And let thy words reveal by what wast made
To face this soil so many centuries."
"The time when godly Titus, with the aid
Of the great King, avenged the wounds whence came
The sacred blood for which was Judas paid,
With the most honored and most lasting name
I was on earth"—the spirit further said—
"Deprived as yet of faith, though not of fame.
The stream of song I poured so honeyéd
That drawn to Rome from my Toulouse, the crown
Of myrtle leaves was placed upon my head.
Statius, my name, still has on earth renown;
Thebes, then the great Achilles were my lore:
Still with this load wayfaring, I fell down.
Seeds to my ardor were the sparks that bore
To me the burning of that flame divine
By which a thousands lighted are, and more:
I mean thy Poem; of all songs of mine
Mother and nurse it was: I reck't no weight,
—Save by that scale—e'en as a drachma fine.
And had my life on earth been set by fate
In Virgil's time, the lifting of my ban
A sun more than I owe, I fain would wait."
These words turned Virgil unto me, like man
Whose silent aspect says: "Keep thy lips closed",
But power of will not all it wishes, can.

For tears and laughter are so predisposed
To passions' surging, whence they spring, that they
Least yield to those who truthful are the most.
I smiled as man who haply winks in play;
Naught said the spirit, to my eyes intent
Where stands the semblance wedged in sharper way.
"May thy travail be achieved to thy content"—
After, he said: "Why has thy aspect shewed
To me just now a gleam of merriment?"
Of either side I now cannot elude
The hold: one bids me silent, one goads me
To speak; wherefore I sigh and understood
Am by my Master: "Let no fear keep thee
From speech"—said he—"speak rather, so to make
Quite clear what has been asked so eagerly."
Whence I: "Thou haply wonder'st for what sake
Such smile upon my lips was hovering,
But greater admiration thou shalt take.
This one who gives my eyes their soaring wing
Is Virgil who taught thee the lusty chord
With which of men and Gods thou once didst sing.
All other reasons for my smile, ignored
Must be as false; the true one must be laid
To what of him just spoke thy very word."
Already kneeling down he fain essayed
To embrace my Doctor's feet; said he: "Forbear,
Brother, a shade art thou and see'st a shade."
He, rising, said: "Let this to thee declare
How vast the love that warms my heart to thee
When I seem of our vanity unaware
And treat the shades as things of density."

Line 3—The woman from Samaria for whom Jesus poured the "waters of truth".

7—On the road to Emmaus.

25—Lachesis (one of the Parcae) had not yet spun all of Dante's thread of life, apportioned by Clotho.

33—As far as human reason may go.

43—The Mountain is unaffected (above the ledge which encloses Purgatory proper) by natural vicissitudes—except when Heaven receives a liberated spirit.

50—Thaumas' daughter is Iris or the rainbow, which to men appears in different places, according to seasons. "There": as viewed from the earth.

62—"Dry vapor", a supposed emanation from the earth and the cause of winds.

54—The Angel with the Keys.

56—Earthquakes were supposed to originate from winds imprisoned in the earth.

61—The soul realizes its full purification from the fact that its will to ascend is no longer hampered.

82—Emperor Titus, with the help of God, punished Jerusalem for the blood of Christ, betrayed by Judas.

85—The name of Poet.

89—The Poet Statius was really a Neapolitan and not from Toulouse. Wrote the "Thebaid" and died while still composing the "Achilleid" (still carrying that load).

97—The Aeneid, Virgil's Poem was Statius' inspiration and his standard to weigh any matter of style.

99—A drachma: fraction of an ounce.

103—I would remain one year longer in Purgatory.

108—The men who are most truthful have least control of their tears and laughter.

111—The expression of the face is keener about the eyes.

CANTO XXII

ARGUMENT

While the three travelers climb to the sixth tier (of Gluttony) Statius tells of his life and of his conversion to Christianity. They soon reach the level roadbed and here their advance is blocked by a tree of curiously inverted shape, bearing beautiful apples. A voice speaks from the thick boughs of the tree.

And now the Angel at our rear was placed
Who to the sixth redoubt made us ascend
When from my forehead was one stroke erased.
And those who their desire toward justice bend
BEATI he had called, and his salute
With SITIUNT and naught else had brought to end.
More than at other straits with lightsome foot
I moved, so that without a labored stride
I kept of the fleet spirits in pursuit.
"When love is kindled"—thus began my Guide—
"By virtue, always 'twill impart its flame
To others, if its glow appears outside.
Hence, from the hour when to our region came
Juvenal, sent our Limbo in Hell to share,
And thy affection did to me declare

Such is the kindly will to thee I bear
That ne'er with body unseen was such a tie;
And now to me will seem but short this stair.
But tell, and as a friend forgive if I
Let overconfidence set loose the rein
And speak to me with friendly liberty:
How could within thy breast a place remain
For avarice amidst a store so vast
Of wisdom which such care thou gave'st to gain?"
After this speech a fleeting laughter passed
On Statius' face, then he replied: "A dear
Mark of thy love in each thy word is cast.
Indeed such things to us oft-time appear
By which to baseless doubts we are deceived
As the true cause of them fails to be clear.
Thy query proves to me thou hast believed
That on the earth a miser's life I spent:
So might suggest the round where I have grieved.
But avarice I kept from mine intent
So far, that for this lack of measure just
Thousands of moons have seen my punishment.
And had I not in time set straight my lust
When I heard thee, there where thy numbers sing—
Of human nature almost in disgust—
'To what canst thou not lead, thou curséd thing,
Hunger for gold, the mortals' avid breast?'
I might be jousting now in the sad ring.
Then I perceived that e'en through spending zest
One's hands may spread too wide their wings, wherefore
That and my other ills I did detest.

CANTO XXII

How many who this difference ignore
Shorn will arise because, for that, to cleanse
This sin they failed, in life or at death's door.

Know also that the contrary offense
Which doth a certain sin directly oppose
Here wilts its green in similar amends.

Therefore if I have suffered amidst those
Who weep their avarice, to cleanse my wrong,
Through its reverse I came to the same woes."

"Now when those cruel arms by thee were sung"—
Thus said the bard of the Bucolic ode—
"Of the twin sorrows from Jocasta sprung,

What was touched on by Clio—and thy own mode—
Shows not that to the faith thou hadst been won
Which if one lacks, good deeds are but vain load.

If this be so, thy darkness by what sun
Or candles was dispelled, so that thy sail
Could follow where the Fisherman leads on?"

And he: "Thou first didst show to me the trail
To the clear springs upon Parnassus' height
And didst some light concerning God disveil.

Thou wast as one who walking through the night
Bears a lit lamp behind, which helps him not
But wised are those who follow, by that light;

When this thou saidst: 'Anew the times are wrought,
Justice returns and the first age of man,
New progeny from Heaven down is brought.'

Poet through thee I was and Christian;
But that my draft a clearer edge acquire
With colors I shall fill what I began.

Already pregnant was the world entire
With the true faith whose seedlings widely bore
The messengers of the eterne Empire.
And thy own words—on which I touched before—
Were so accordant with their new address
That I began to be their visitor.
Then in their life I saw such holiness
That while they suffered from Domitian's rage
Was not without my weeping their distress.
And while I was upon the earthly stage
I gave them help, and 'gainst their life unstained
Naught but my scorn could other sects engage.
And when I led the Greeks—thus poesy feigned—
Upon the streams of Thebes, I was baptized,
But hidden Christian I, through fear, remained,
Long as a pagan outwardly disguised.
The rush of the fourth round my tepidness
Has, longer than four centuries, chastised.
But thou who hast from all that now I bless
Removed the cover, tell—while yet the space
Of time for our ascent is in excess—
Where is our Terence, famed from ancient days,
Caecilius, Plautus, Varro, if thou know'st:
Tell whether damned they are, and in what place."
—"They, Persius, I and others in great host"—
Answered my Guide—"are dwelling with that Greek
To whom the Muses of their milk gave most,
In the first terrace of the dungeon bleak:
About that mount which is the eternal ground
Of those who nourished us, we often speak.

Euripides and Antiphont are found
With us, Simonides and Agathon
And other Greeks who once were laurel-crowned.
There also of thy people, Antigone
Is seen, and, with Deiphile, Argia,
Ismene, too, sad as of yore and wan.
She there is seen who pointed out Langia;
Tiresias' daughter, Thetis there are shut
And with her sisters, too, Deidamia."
Both poets had by now their sermons cut
And were intently observing the new sight
Clear of the climb and of the walled rut.
Four of its maids the chariot of light
Had left behind, and held the fifth the team
Aiming the fiery horn still toward the height.
Then spoke my Guide: "Let to the outer seam
Turn our right shoulder; circling thus the hill,
As we are wonted, proper plan I deem."
Thus usage did the duty of guide fulfill
And we proceeded, less to fear inclined
Since had that worthy soul shown his good will.
The two were leading; I, alone, behind,
Mused on their speech and what it did import;
Thus on the art of verse gained light my mind.
But soon their friendly reasonings cut short
A tree that blocked our path: it bore a crop
Of apples of a good and odorous sort.
And as fir-tree whose limbs up to the top
Taper away, that tree so downward shrank
That, I believe, all climbers it would stop.

On that side where our path would strike the bank
Fell from the lofty rock a liquor clear
Whose mounting humor all the leaflets drank.
When both the poets to the tree came near
Lo! from the boughs a voice which loudly spake:
"To you this food shall give none of its cheer."
Then added: "Mary indeed cared more to make
The festive wedding honored and complete
Than for her lips, now urgent for your sake.
In ancient Rome the women found a feat
Drink in plain water; and Daniel was sage
When, spurning food, of knowledge gained the meat.
Like gold was beautiful the primal age:
Hunger made savory the acorns' taste,
Thirst nectar-like the brooks' clear beverage.
The food that nourished John in the dry waste
Was locusts and wild honey, and through that fare
Such greatness he achieved and was so praised
As by the Gospel ye are made aware."

CANTO XXII

Line 4, etc.—The Angel had repeated the Gospel's Beatitude: "Blessed (Beati) those who hunger and thirst (sitiunt) for justice" leaving out the clause "for justice" — thus the words apply to the sixth Tier (of Gluttony.)

14—Roman poet, contemporary of Statius.

33—In the fifth tier Avarice and its opposite—Prodigality—are purified.

40—From the Aeneid, III, 56: "Quid non mortalia pectora cogis.... etc.

42—In Hell, with the Prodigal and the Avaricious—See next Note.

46—Reference of Inf. VII, 56, etc., where it is said that the Prodigal will arise "with their hair shorn".

49—Every sin has a contrary excess which is punished in the same place.

55—Statius' "Thebaid" deals with the war between Eteocles and Polynices —twin sons of Jocasta—for the mastery of Thebes, a "cruel" theme.

56—Virgil, who wrote also the "Bucolics" (pastoral songs).

58—The Thebaid begins with an invocation to Clio, the Heroic Muse; In that poem Statius does not appear a Christian.

70—Quotation from famous passage of Virgil, Ecl. IV, 5—which was commonly thought a prophecy of Christianity.

83—The widespread persecution of Christians under the Emperor Domitian.

88—Before writing the Thebaid.

94—Who hast revealed to me the beauties of Christian life.

97, etc.—Roman writers.

101—Homer.

104—Of Mount Parnassus, abode of the Muses.

106, etc.—Greek writers.

109, etc.—More or less legendary characters introduced by Statius in his poems (thy people).

111—Daughter of Jocasta, victim of many misfortunes.

112—Hysipyle who showed the fountain Langia to the thirsty soldiers marching against Thebes.

118—Four hours of day had passed.

131, etc.—The inverted tree is possibly a symbol of Temptation; the alluring fruits and the "liquor clear", beyond the shades' reach, enhancing their desire.

142—At the Marriage of Cana. Mary was not prompted by selfish desire; her lips cared not for wine, which now pray for you.

148—The legendary "Golden Age."

CANTO XXIII

ARGUMENT

Dante and his Guides are moving away from the strange tree when they are overtaken by a band of souls who suffer in expiation of Gluttony. Among them Dante meets an old friend, Forese Donati, who speaks at length to him.

While to the tree was fixed my vision—blurred
Amidst the verdant boughs—as one might gaze
Who wastes life after the little bird,
Spoke he who holds more than a father's place
For me: "Come now, my son; we must compute
What time is granted, in more useful ways."
I turned my sight and no less quick my foot
After the Sages who were speaking so
That of no burden was to me the route.
And now I heard, 'mid crying, that hymn flow
LABIA MEA DOMINE—the cry
Was such as to give birth to joy and woe.
—"Sweet father, what is it"—then questioned I—
"That strikes my ears?"—and he: "Some shades, perchance
Who here go loosing of their sin the tie."

As pensive pilgrims turn a sidelong glance
To strangers overtaken on the road,
But e'en while turning, halt not their advance;

Thus from our rear—under a keener goad—
A crowd of souls passed us, devout in mien,
Who looked, without a word, and wonder showed.

The eyes of each were black and sunken in,
Their face was pale, their form so shrunk away
That from the very bones took shape their skin.

E'en Erisichthon did not so decay,
Methinks, to such an arid husk and wan
Through starving, when was greatest his dismay.

I said within myself: "Methinks that yon
The people go who lost Jerusalem
When Mary set her teeth into her son."

Their sockets were like rings without the gem;
Those who have O M O in man's visage read,
Would there have clearly recognized the M.

Who could believe that fruits or waters spread
Such scents—(if from his ken the cause were barred)
And bring this on, through craving from them bred?

What starves them so, kept me a-wondering hard,
The reason being not yet manifest
Of their lean look and of their dismal shard.

When lo! toward me (his eyes were deep recessed
Within his head) a spirit keenly gazed,
Then loudly cried: "What grace makes me so blest?"

All tell-tale features were in him effaced,
But was to me his voice a patent clew
To what his aspect had so turned to waste.

CANTO XXIII

That was the spark from which re-kindled grew
My knowledge of the cheek-transmuted shade
And there Forese's face again I knew.

"Mind not this arid scab"—toward me he prayed—
"That all the color from my skin has ta'en,
Nor yet the lack of flesh in me displayed;

But tell me truly of thee, and of those twain
Souls who appear therein thy steps to guide;
From speaking now to me do not refrain."

"Thy face for which, in death, of yore I cried
No less shocks me to weeping sadly now,
Seeing it so deformed"—thus I replied.

"But for that God who so picks you, speak thou;
While thus I wonder, ask no words of mine;
Craving for else does not my speech allow."

And he to me: "Falls from the mind divine
A virtue upon that water and that plant
We left behind, whence I have grown so fine.

All these from whom the cry comes and the chant
Were gluttons to excess; to them here now's
Hunger and thirst which holiness will grant.

Craving for food and drink in us arouse
The scents from the fair fruit and from the spray
Which there spreads up into the verdant boughs.

And not one time alone the scents convey
Fresh pain to us, as we this terrace tread,
(Pain I am saying but joy should I say)

For by that yearning to the tree we 're led
Which prompted Christ, rejoicing, to invoke
Eli, the time his veins, to free us, bled."

"Forese, from that day"—to him I spoke—
"Thou didst change worlds to life more pure and true
Not the fifth time to spring the earth awoke.
If from thy body power of sinning flew
Before the hour when born was in thy heart
Good sorrow that to God weds us anew,
What caused that on this height already art?
I did expect to find thee still below
Where time is paid with time as counterpart."
And he to me: "My quick release I owe—
And drinking the sweet wormwood of this ache—
To my dear Nella's tears' uncheckéd flow.
I 'scaped the coast of waiting, for the sake
Of prayers and sighs from her devoted breast,
And other rounds did not my climbing break.
More dear to God and by his love more blest
Is my fond widow whom I loved so well,
The more alone she is in virtue's quest.
Sardinia's Barbary doth truly excel
In keeping women's gentle modesty,
The Barbary where I left her to dwell.
Sweet brother, what wilt thou that I tell thee?
I am already of future time aware,
To which this hour not over-old shall be
When Florence from her pulpits shall declare
A warning on her shameless womankind
Not to display their bosom and breasts bare.
What heathen women could one ever find,
Or Saracens, who urged to wear some drape
Hardly the Church or other power would mind?

But did it not their certitude escape
What the fast turning Heav'n for them doth weave
Their mouths would be to cry already agape;
Because, if my foresight does not deceive,
Ere one who's soothed now by "nanna's" spell
Grows hairy cheeks, they shall most sorely grieve.
But, brother, who thou art, now, praythee, tell;
Not I alone, but, see, my fellows all
Gaze where thou seem'st the sunbeams to repel."
And I to him: "If thou wilt but recall
What thou with me, what I with thee have been
The present memory would taste of gall.
He drew me forth, out of that life terrene,
Who goes ahead, but yesterday, when round
The sister of him yon, by you was seen."
The sun I pointed—"Then through the profound
Night he led me, the truly dead among,
With this true flesh which to his will is bound.
Thence I have come, made by his comforts strong,
Climbing and circling all this mountain trail
That in you straightens what the world left wrong.
This much shall me his help, he says, avail
That I shall be where Beatrice dwells;
Thereafter shall to me his presence fail.
Virgil is this one spirit who so tells"—
I pointed him—"The other shade thou see'st
Is that for whom just shook all coasts and dells
Within your realm, when he has been released."

Line 3—One fond of hunting.

6—We must utilize better the time allowed us in Purgatory.

11—Psalm L, 17—"O Lord, thou wilt open my lips."

25—A Thessalian doomed by the Goddess Ceres to perpetual starvation.

27—In desperation, he tried to eat his own flesh, when condemned to starvation by the Gods.

30—A woman named Mary is said to have eaten her son, at the time of Titus's siege to Jerusalem: the whole population was starving.

32—O M O—Latin for "man"; some supposed that those letters appear in the features of the human face. The eyesockets would be the "O" and cheekbones and nose would form the "M".

45—To his identity.

48—Forese Donati, a close friend of Dante's.

60—Dante was still wondering concerning the cause of the souls' starved appearance.

73—The desire of expiation.

79—If thou didst repent only in advanced age.

83—Where delay in repentance is paid with delay in being admitted to purification.

87—Forese's widow.

88—The Ante-purgatory.

94—The wildest part of the island of Sardinia was known as "Barbary".

96—Florence.

110—In a few years—in the time one now an infant lulled to sleep by a "nanna" (lullaby) shall grow to manhood. The allusion is to future grave losses by the Florentines in war and civil strifes.

116—Refers to a period of rather worldly living when Dante and Forese had been boon companions.

118—Virgil.

119—When you saw the moon (sister of him yon—the sun—) full orbed. "Yesterday", that is, but a few days ago.

CANTO XXIV

ARGUMENT

Walking along with Forese (on the Terrace of Gluttony) Dante recognizes several spirits; one of them, a poet from Lucca, speaks at length with him Another strange tree is met, then the Angel guarding the next pass.

Nor speech our gait, nor did our gait impede
Our speech, but, talking, we went fast ahead
As when pushed by good wind a ship makes speed.
The shades meanwhile, who seemed things more than dead,
Marveled at me out of their eyes' deep bore,
Knowing that life from me not yet had fled.
Said I, continuing the speech before
Began: —"Yet faster, haply, would be his pace
But now for others' sake he keeps it slower.
But, if thou know'st, tell of Piccarda's place
And tell if worthy of note is anyone
'Mid those who look at me with such keen gaze."
—"My sister, in whom beauty and goodness shone
(Which brighter I know not) with victory's
Exultant crown, stands by th'Olympian throne."

16 This first he said, and then:—"Of any of these
Mention is not forbidden, since our fare
Doth so our features past resemblance squeeze."
19 Pointing his finger:—"Bonaggiunta is there,
He Lucca-born; beyond, with him abreast,
More than the rest with face worn by this care,
22 One in whose arms the Holy Church did rest;
From Tours he came: here purgéd, fasting for
Bolsena's eels to which sweet wine gave zest."
25 And one by one he shewed me many more;
Glad were they all as each by name was told
And none I saw whose looks were darkened o'er.
28 I saw, while there their empty jaws they rolled,
Ubaldin della Pila and Boniface
Who pastured with his staff an ample fold.
31 And Sir Marchese who had much of space
For drinking, at Forli'—with less of drought;
Sated he never was in all his days.
34 As man appraises, looking round about,
One more than other; such a shade, methought,
Most eager to converse I singled out.
37 'Twas he from Lucca: I heard him murmur aught
Of one Gentucca, where he felt the hurt
Which by her plucking, Justice on him wrought.
40 —"Spirit"—I said—"who so appear'st to court
Some speech with me, see that thy words are plain
And speak so both of us be happy for't."—
43 —"A girl is born"—said he—"and has not ta'en
As yet her veil, who shall make dear to thee
My town, for all that men may it arraign.

CANTO XXIV

In going hence, bear thou this prophecy:
If thou hast failed my murmur to appraise,
Things coming true shall bring thee clarity.

But tell if here I see him who the grace
Drew forth of the new rhymes and 'gan to sing:
LADIES WHO UNDERSTAND OF LOVE THE WAYS."

And I—"Such man I am who, listening
Whene'er Love breathes, I note, and is such guise
As it dictates within, to words I bring."—

—"Brother"—said he—"I now see well the ties
Which held the Notary, Guittone and me
Far from the sweet new style whose notes now rise;

And your wide-opened wings as well I see
How after your Inspirer they move close,
Not like our pinions, for a certainty.

And if in this research one further goes
No other cleft he sees, twixt either style."
Here, as if satisfied, to stop he chose.

As do the birds that winter 'long the Nile:
Sometimes in closéd flock they shape their flight,
Then move with greater haste, arrayed in file,

Thus all the people gathered in my sight
Turning their visage, faster gait pursued,
Both by their leanness and their will made light.

As after racing, one feels lassitude,
Lets his roadfellows go and slows his tread
Till in his breast the panting is subdued;

Thus let that holy flock forge on ahead
Forese, while his steps with mine agreed,
And:—"When shall I see thee again?"—he said.

—"I know not when from life I shall be freed"—
Said I—"but my return, whate'er its haste
I, with my will, shall to this shore precede;
Because the city wherein my life is placed
More, ev'ry day, unfleshed of virtue grows
And destined seems to end in dismal waste."
—"Now go"—said he—"The one most guilty of those
Evils I see at a beast's tail dragged on
Toward the deep vale where guilt no shriving knows.
Faster the beast seems with each stride to run,
Ever increasing till it strikes the stark
Body and leaves it there most foully undone.
Those wheels shall not have turned much of their arc"—
Here heavenward he looked—"when 'twill be clear
To thee what in my words must be left dark.
But now thou must remain; time precious so
Is in this realm, its loss too heavy weighs
On me, if walking thus with thee as peer."—
As when a horseman at a gallop strays
From closéd ranks and rushes to the fore
To claim the first encounter and the praise—
Thus he from us, but speeding even more,
While on the road I lingered with the two
Who such great marshals were, on earth, of yore.
And when in front of us ahead he drew
So that my eye was such a follower
To him, as did my mind his words pursue,
Another apple tree with branches fair
For leaves and fruits, not far away, my glance
Engaged, as I just then had turnéd there.

People were under it who stretched their hands
And shouted toward the boughs a blurréd cry.
Of eager children was their countenance
Who beg, and he who's begged does not comply,
But to make them with keener wish enthused
Hides not the thing desired but holds it high.
Then moved the crowd away, as disabused,
And we arrived against the mighty root
That has so much of prayers and tears refused.
—"Pass on and let not here approach your foot;
A tree up higher is found on which Eve plied
Her teeth; this plant is of that trunk a shoot."—
Thus from amidst the boughs a strange voice cried;
Whence I, Virgil and Statius, keeping close
Moved on ahead, along the walling side.
—"Recall the curséd cloud-born brood"—arose
The voice again—"who dared, when surfeited,
'Gainst Theseus their double breast oppose.
The Hebrews, too, who proved too softly bred
When drinking, and for that they were disdained
When down the hills to Madian Gideon led."—
Thus flanking close one margin we maintained
Our pace, and heard of sins of gluttony
By which so little afterwards is gained.
Then, on the vacant pavement swinging free,
A thousand steps or more we movéd on
While each was plunged in wordless reverie.
—"What think ye of, ye three who go alone"—
Spoke sudden voice; whence shivered all my frame
As timid beasts would do, in panic thrown.

I raised my head to see the voice whence came
And never there were seen in furnace fire
Metals or glass which gleamed with such a flame,
And one I saw who spoke:—"If ye desire
Upward to mount, turn: here the passage lies
Which all must enter who to peace aspire."—
Quite dazzled by his aspect were my eyes
And backward to my Guides my look I bent
As one who only moves by gi'en advice.
And as, announcing the white dawn's ascent
The gentle breeze of May wafts on, and all
From herbs' and flowers' scents is redolent,
E'en so I felt across my forehead fall
A wind, and felt the beat of pinions whence
Was brought to me a scent ambrosial.
And this I heard: "Blest they in whom resplends
Such light of grace that the feeding lust
On heart's desires not too much smoke extends,
And who seek victuals, e'en as it is just."

CANTO XXIV

Line 9—Statius was lingering, possibly to be with Virgil.

10—Forese's sister. She will be met with in Par. III.

19—This Bonaggiunta had achieved some fame as a poet in the vulgar Italian.

22—Pope Martin IV—had been treasurer of the church of St. Martin at Tours. It seems that he was fond of the eels from the lake of Bolsena, cooked after being steeped in a certain kind of wine called "vernaccia".

29—Ubaldino, a gentleman from the castle called "Pila", in Tuscany. Boniface, of the Genoese Fieschi, Archbishop of Ravenna.

31—A gentleman from Forli', famed for his drinking.

38—A lady of Lucca: Dante was her honored guest, afterwards.

39—In the throat.

44—Gentucca was at the time a young girl, having not yet taken the "veil" or that sort of head-dress worn by married women.

47—His murmuring "Gentucca".

50—The poetry of the "Vita Nova"—in general the new style introduced by Dante.

51—Beginning of a poem in the "Vita Nova".

55, etc.—The Notary (a Sicilian Jacopo), Friar Guittone, of Arezzo, and others had produced rather artificial poetry. The "new sweet style" was spontaneous, following the inspiration of love.

61—The difference between the old and the new style was mainly that between artifice and naturalness.

82, etc.—Corso Donati, Forese's brother, took a principal part in the civil strife at Florence. Made a prisoner after a battle he fell from his horse and—legend had it—was dragged away, entangled in the harness, to the very mouth of Hell.

101—It was hard for the eye to follow him, as for the mind to follow his words.

105—Around a bend of the road.

115—Up in the Terrestrial Paradise (at the summit of the Mountain) is a tree, the one whose fruit was tasted by Eve. This plant—and other similar ones on this Terrace—have grown from shoots of that tree.

121—The Centaurs: filled with wine they dared attack Theseus who slew many of them.

124—Gideon for the attack to Madian selected those of his followers who drank from the river with their cupped hand, leaving aside the others who sprawled down to drink directly with their mouth.

CANTO XXV

ARGUMENT

The travelers are climbing toward the seventh Terrace (of Lust). Dante is still wondering how the shades can exhibit such external features as he has seen on the preceding round. Statius explains the relation between soul and body in a living man, and between soul and shade-appearance. They reach the seventh round.

We must without a stop now climb the height:
Was the meridian by the Lamp of day
To Taurus left, to Scorpion by the Night.
Wherefore like men who brooking no delay,
Whate'er may come (if Want, bespurréd, tears
At them) with steady steps go on their way,
One out in front, one after, on the stairs
Of that ascending rift ahead we pressed—
Whose narrowness the travelers unpairs.
As fledgling stork who puts his wings to test:
Eager lifts them at first, but quickly again
Folds them, because afraid to leave his nest,
Thus within me I felt now wax, now wane
The will to ask, and come e'en to the act
Of one whose lips the form of speech have ta'en.

His gait, fast as it was, he never slacked,
Yet my sweet father spoke:—"Release the dart
Which now thy hand holds to the iron backed."—
I opened then my mouth with fearless heart
And thus began:—" What doth the flesh so grind
Away, where need of food can have no part?"—
—"If Meleager shouldst recall to mind
How he was wasted while the brand was charred,
Surely no such sour taste shouldst thou here find.
And if your very motions shouldst regard
And how your mirrored self with them agrees,
Would seem o'erripe what now to thee seems hard.
But that within thy will thou rest at ease,
Statius is here; I beg him prayerfully
That to become thy healer he may please."—
—"If in thy presence"—answered Statius—"I
Enfold the eternal plan to him, I fear
No guilt, as I to thee naught can deny."—
Then he began: "If that which thou shalt hear,
My son, from me, thy mind grasps and retains,
The "how" thou seek'st shall in that light be clear.
The perfect blood which by the thirsty veins
In not absorbed but which, as food unused
Taken from tables, thus intact remains,
For all man's limbs is—from the heart—infused
With virtue informative; thus doth it pour
Along the veins, that limbs may be produced.
Again distilled, to place which to ignore
'Tis better than to name, it falls; and hence
In Nature's vase, on alien blood drips o'er.

CANTO XXV

They both commingle here their influence:
One in a passive, one in active state
Due to the perfect place whence it descends.
It then begins, thus joined, to operate:
It thickens first, then fills with life's own dower
What—for its use—it caused to condensate.
Having become a soul, the active power
(Now like a plant's—yet differing in this:
One is "in via", one has reached its flower)
Works in such way to gain the properties
(Such as sea-fungi have) of sense and shift,
And organs for the powers whose seed it is.
And now, my son, comes the wide spreading drift
Which sends the power from the begetter's heart
Into all members planned by Nature's thrift.
Yet thou see'st not how doth the human start
Out of the animal, which is a point
On which has erred man wiser than thou art.
Possible intellect as if disjoint
From the soul, in his doctrine he conceived
Because he saw for it no organ coined.
But ope thy breast to what must be believed;
Soon as the foetus, while each part enfolds,
The brain's articulation has achieved,
Upon such wondrous art from Nature's moulds
Turns joyous the Prime Mover, and breathes there
A spirit new, which such a virtue holds
To draw what has therein the active share
To its own substance: thus one soul is made
Which lives and feels and is of self aware.

And that my words be less with wonder weighed
Look at the sun: how turns its heat to wine
Joined to the humors that the vines pervade.
When Lachesis no more has thread to twine,
It leaves the flesh, still 'in virtute' of all
Its gifts endowed, both human and divine.
Silent each other faculty, and withal
Are memory, will-power, intelligence
Much keener than when each was matter's thrall.
Then of itself—unchecked—the soul descends
And wondrously on either strand finds place
And here its destined road first apprehends.
As soon as there 'tis circumscribed by space
Formative virtue, in such way and strong
As in a living man, throws 'round its rays.
And as the air, with vapors overhung,
Through alien luster that in it reflects
Glimmers with varied hues where light is flung,
In such a way the ambient air accepts
The form which from its virtue—like a die—
The soul which there has stopped, in it injects.
And as the flamelet follows faithfully
Its parent fire to every place it goes,
The soul's new form with it has such a tie.
When thus made apt its semblance to disclose
'Tis called a shade and organizes then
Every sense, and even sight it grows.
Hence we may speak, hence we may laugh as men
Hence fashion we our tears, and so our sighs
Which through this Mount have come into thy ken.

106 As the pangs of desire in us arise
And other feelings, thus takes shape the shade:
This is the cause of what brings thee surprise."—
109 We had now reached where the last price is paid
And had already turned on our right flank
And our concern another care now swayed.
112 Here outward shot a fire from the steep bank
While from the floor a wind in upward sweep
Flected it back so that from there it shrank.
115 Hence to the open side we had to keep,
In single file: I feared the burning there
And here I feared the falling down the deep.
118 My Leader said:—"While through this place we fare
With a short rein our vision must be bound:
Little enough would cause us here to err."—
121 SUMMAE DEUS CLEMENTIAE, such sound
Came from the bosom of the mighty heat,
That I could not keep me from turning 'round.
124 With moving shades I saw the flames replete;
And, changing now and then my scope, I view'd
A while the shades, a while I watched my feet.
127 After the verse whose words that hymn conclude
With "VIRUM NON COGNOSCO" shook the air;
Then came anew the hymn, in tone subdued.
130 That closed again, they cried: "The forest ne'er
Diana left, but forth from that enclose
Drove Helice, when Venus poisoned her."
133 The hymn again, then a new shout: of those
Women and husbands who in life were chaste
As Christian virtue and marriage both impose.

Such mode, I do believe, lasts them while glazed
By fire, for all their time upon that round;
Such cark they suffer, such repasts they taste
Until their sore, at last, again is sound.

Line 2—The Sun had left behind the stars of Taurus on the meridian of Purgatory; night had left Scorpion on the meridian of the opposite hemisphere (of Jerusalem); it was then about two hours from midday, for Dante.

17—The arrow (of desire) had been drawn so far back that its iron point touched the bow. Indicating tenseness.

22—At Meleager's birth the Parcae decreed that he would live as long as would last a log then burning in the fireplace. His mother snatched the log away beating the fire out of it—she kept it then concealed. Years afterwards, angry at her son, she threw the log again into the fire and Meleager was consumed with it.

24—Not hard to understand the starved appearance of the shades.

25—A man's motions are repeated by his "mirrored self"; thus the unsubstantial stuff of the shades reflects (is affected by) the passions of the soul.

37—The perfect blood (substantial part) (40)—has received from the heart a power informative (productive) of all man's limbs, and goes through the veins only for the purpose of forming them (through generation). (43)—Still more refined it drips on alien blood (the male principle on the female principle). (47)—The passive blood is the female's; the active blood the male's because the latter comes from a "perfect place", the heart. (49)—This now begins to operate by first thickening the passive principle then vivifying what it caused to thicken in order to use it. (52)—It has now become a "vegetative" soul, like a plant's; only the "soul" of a plant has reached its apex while this human soul is still "in via"—on a progressive road.

55—It gains sense and motion; it has become a "sensitive" soul and works to gain the organs for the future human qualities that are in it as in a seed. (58)—Now comes the "drift", the spreading of the current of life (within the foetus) to produce all of man's members.

CANTO XXV

63—Averroe', the Arabian philosopher, thought there was no connection between the "intellective soul" (scholastically, the "possible intellect") with the vegetative + sensitive soul.

70—When Nature has done her part, God directly breathes into the foetus the intellective soul which then absorb the vegetative + sensitive soul—and there is only one soul.

79—At death, the soul leaves the body still possessed "virtually" of all its powers.

82—But the faculties expressed through the body are dormant—the intellectual faculties keener than before, when it was subservient to body conditions.

84—On Acheron's or Tiber's shores.

85—Whether to Heaven or to Hell.

88—The same formative power which produced man's limbs still radiates from the soul.

91—As dampened air reflects the luster of the sun, and produces the rainbow, (94)—thus the air receives an impression from the soul (where it has become localized); hence the appearance of a shade.

121—A Church hymn: "O God of supreme mercy".

128—"I know no man"—the words of the Virgin Mary to the Angel of the Annunciation.

130—The Virgin Diana never left her forest, but she drove out of it the nymph Helice when poisoned by Venus (smitten with love).

133—They shouted examples of chaste women and husbands.

CANTO XXVI

ARGUMENT

On the seventh and last Terrace (of Lust) the travelers meet two crowds of souls who are walking in the fire, in opposite direction to each other. Two of the shades speak to Dante.

Thus one before the other we proceed
Along the edge, and my good Master says
Quite often: "Let my warnings help: take heed."
On my right shoulder now struck the sunrays
Which, irradiating all the Occident
To gleaming whiteness changed the azure space.
Under my shadow seemed the fiery enceinte
Still redder; at that portent visible
The many passing shades looked on, intent.
It was this reason which did first impel
Those shades to speak of me; themselves among,
They said—"His flesh seems not fictitious shell."—
And then toward me some of the spirits swung
Far as they could, though showing their concern
Not to protrude outside the fiery tongue.

"O thou who followest others, not for spurn
Of haste, but through thy reverence, mayhap,
Attend to me who in thirst and fire here burn.
Not I alone crave answer; all whom wrap
These flames feel thirst for it, more than would whet
Indian or Aethiop a cool stream to lap.
Tell how it is that like a wall art set
Against the sun, as if into the snare
Death lays for all, thou hadst not entered yet."
Thus from the press one spoke, and to declare
Myself quite ready I was, did I not stray
To other novelty that loomed in there.
For in the middle of the burning way
Facing this crowd, I saw another stride,
And in suspense I view'd the new array.
Then each of them I see from every side
Make ready and to mutual kiss advance,
Not halting, with brief feasting satisfied.
Like this, within their brownish ordinance
The ants each other nose, and haply inquire
About their way or their expected chance.
When from that friendly greeting they retire,
Ere even a step's distance they proceed,
All strive to cry, each of the other higher.
—"Gomorrah and Sodom"—the newcomers lead;
—"Pasiphae fills the cow"—the others cry—
"That to his luxury the bull may speed."—
After, like cranes whose flocks divide and fly
To the Riphaean hills or toward the sand
(Those of the heat, these of the freezing, shy),

One crowd goes on, and comes the other band,
All amidst tears repeating their first song
And shouting loud their proper reprimand.

Again approaching me, that very throng
Which had already my attention sought
Showed by their face how from my lips they hung.

I, having noted twice what was that caught
Their fancy, thus began: "O souls, secure
That state of peace, shall be, some day, your lot,

Not left on earth, unripened, or mature,
But here my members, with the blood that flowed
In them and with their joints, with me endure.

To heal my blindness I must climb this road.
Above a Woman is who gains me grace
To carry through your world my mortal load.

So may your best desire, ere many days,
Be sated, and that heaven shelter you
Which is love-filled and covers the most space,

In order that my page record this, too,
Tell who you are, and who those spirits are
Who with their back to yours this course pursue."

They were, in troubled wonder, similar
To mountaineers uncouth who mutely look
When in the city from their wilds afar.

Every spirit such a semblance took,
But when that wonderment they did discharge
Which noble hearts but a short time may brook,

—"Thou happy who hast come within our marge"—
The soul who first had asked, began again—
"Of better life thy knowledge to enlarge.

Those who come not with us, here brought the stain
Of that for which was hurled of 'Queen' the name
'Gainst Caesar passing in triumphal train.
Whence at the parting 'Sodom' they proclaim,
As thou hast heard, and thus themselves indict
And help the burning with their very shame.
Our guilt was of a sin hermaphrodite;
But human laws we held in disregard
Following like a beast our appetite.
We brand ourselves for that which makes us charred,
When parting we call out the name of her
Who mocked a beast in the beast-shapen shard.
Now knowest our acts and what our vices were.
Time lacks and I, besides, this could not say
If for the name of all shouldst haply care.
But I—let this in part thy wish allay—
Am Guido Guinicelli: already I purge
For well I sorrowed ere my final day."—
I felt as when the mother's sight did urge
Her sons to act—the time Lycurgus grieved—
(Though to that much I did not then insurge)
When named I heard and him in front perceived
Father of mine, and of my betters, those
Who ever rhymes of love sweet-thralling weaved.
No sound I hear, no word from my lips flows
While long I walk, eyes on him rivetéd,
Though for the fire I go no further close.
When on his aspect I enough have fed
Unto his service all myself I place
With those assertions whence belief is bred.

And he to me:—"Thou leav'st in me such trace,
From what I hear, so deeply marked and clear,
Lethe cannot dim it, much less efface.
But if in thy sworn words the truth I hear
Tell me the cause why in all speech of thine,
And in all looks thou seem'st to hold me dear."—
And I to him:—"Your rhymes so sweetly entwine
That while will last on earth the modern wont
Shall be held dear your every inkéd line."—
—"Brother"—said he—and pointed one in front—
"To him there pointed, in the mother tongue
As better craftsman must be given vaunt.
In prose of romance lore and in love song
He all surpassed, whate'er the fools may plead
Who put the Lemosin on higher rung.
To clamor, not to truth their minds concede,
And that is what they base their judgment on
Ere they to art or reason give some heed.
Thus with Guittone have some ancients done
And each to each his shouted praise trasmits
Till, with most men, o'er him the truth has won.
But if thou hast such privilege that fits
One for the climbing to that cloistered height
Where Christ as Abbot of the College sits,
A Pater Noster do for me recite
As far as for our world can there be prayed,
Since here cannot touch us of sin the blight."—
Then haply to give place to other shade
Who stood near him, he vanished through the flame
As fish through water toward the deep doth fade.

Up to him pointed, forward then I came
And promptly said my longing would provide
Readily a gracious place to keep his name.
He courteously began and thus replied:
"The kind demand of yours has pleased me so
That I from you cannot, and wish not, hide;
Arnaut I am who weep and singing go:
Joyously I see ahead the hoped for day
And my past folly I see, for bitter woe.
Now for that power divine, I ask and pray,
Which leads you, free from cold and free from fire,
Remember in good time the price I pay."—
Then he was lost within the purging pyre.

CANTO XXVI

Line 6—Effect of approaching sunset.

21—People in hot countries.

32—A mark of honest love.

40—The people of those cities were notorious for indulging in abnormal lust. The Bible tells of their destruction.

41—Pasiphae, the mother of the Minotaur; Daedalus built for her a wooden cow: the story symbolizes the excess of lust.

44—The Riphaen hills are in northern Russia—the "sand" is the sand of the desert.

46—One crowd goes on (from us), the other comes along (with us).

47—The song is the hymn mentioned in Canto XXV, the reprimand in the double cry stated above, line 40-41.

58—Blindness of the mind.

59—Beatrice.

63—The Empyrean.

76—The spirits in the other crowd were guilty of the sin of Sodom.

78—During Caesar's triumph after the Gallic wars a ditty was sung in Rome's streets charging him with the unnatural sin.

82—The two sexes were involved in the sins of this crowd.

86—Pasiphae.

92—A renowned poet from Bologna, Died 1276 and had suffered little delay in coming to Purgatory.

94—King Lycurgus, raging for the loss of a young son, for which he blamed the Queen, was about to put her to death, but two grown up sons of her happening on the scene, rushed up to save her.

96—Dante felt like rushing toward Guido's shade, but did not dare.

97—Dante respected Guido as the father of the "sweet new style."

108—The River of Forgetfulness, at the summit of Purgatory.

113—The present use of popular dialects for literary compositions, instead of the learned Latin.

116—This proves to be Arnaud Daniel, famed Troubadour from Provence.

120—Other people thought more of the Troubadour Gerault of Limoges.

124—Also in regard to the other poet, Guittone of Arezzo, popular clamor (the shouting of praises from one to another) has set him too high: but now the truth has won out.

129—Paradise.

131—That is: only for our earlier release.

136—To Arnaud Daniel, pointed at by Guido.

140—In the original these lines are in the Provençal tongue.

CANTO XXVII

ARGUMENT

They cross the wall of fire and on the other side, night having fallen, they lie down to rest. A symbolic dream comes to Dante during that sleep. At dawn they reach the meadow of Terrestrial Paradise, at the top of the Mountain.

As when with his first beams the place he flails
Wherein was shed the blood of his Seigneur—
And over Ebro's stream high hangs the Scales,
And parchéd Ganges feels of nones the glare—
Thus stood the Sun: while did the day expire,
Before us, joyous, shone God's Messenger.
I see him on the brink, out of the fire:
BEATI MUNDO CORDE: thence he cries
With voice, than all the sounds of mortals, higher.
Then: "Hallowed souls, no one can further rise
But through this pass of fire; through it make haste,
Close not your ears to yonder melodies."
Such words he spoke when we his semblance faced,
And I became, apprized of what he meant,
Such as a man who in the fosse is placed.

With tightly clasped hands, I forward bent,
Viewing the fire, and sharp came to my mind
Bodies once seen in such envelopment.

Whereon both turned to me my Leaders kind
And Virgil said: "Torment, perhaps, my son,
Thou may'st meet here but death thou canst not find.

Recall to mind, recall... on Geryon
If I brought thee unharmed, what by my power,
When God is closer, shall not now be done?

Hold this for sure: if in that flaming bower
A thousand years and o'er thou shouldst remain
The fire could not a hair of thine devour.

And shouldst thou think that with these words I feign,
Closer to it approach and with thy hands
Holding thy garment's hem, shalt credence gain.

Discard therefore, discard all fears at once;
Turn hither and with courage cross this strait."
Yet, against conscience, I did not advance.

Seeing me rigid there and obstinate,
A little troubled: 'See, my son"—he said—
"Beatrice and thee this wall keeps separate."

As hearing Thysbe's name, though nearly dead,
Pyramus oped his eyes and looked at her,
The time the mulberry was dyed with red,

Thus, thawing 'round my heart the rigid layer,
I turned to my wise Leader when woke me
The name which in my heart blooms up for e'er.

He shook his head and said: "How could it be
That we would stay this side?"—with such a smile
As when a dangled fruit makes child agree.

46 Then in the fire he plunged, first of the file,
And beggéd Statius third to make this pass,
Who had divided us for a long while.

49 When I was in, even in boiling glass
I would have rushed as to a cooling brook,
So past all bearing was that ardent mass.

52 To comfort me my Leader undertook
With speech of Beatrice, and: "In her eyes"—
He said—"meseems that I already look."

55 A singing from across gave us advice
As to our road: intent to it, our way
We made beyond the fire and to the rise.

58 "VENITE BENEDICTI PATRIS MEI,"
Sounded therefrom out of a gleaming light:
It conquered me, nor could I bear its ray.

61 It added: "Sets the sun and comes the night:
Here do not stay but hasten on your gait,
The while the West not yet in black is dight."

64 Within the rock the path was climbing straight
To such a part, my body did not let
In front of me the Sun, now low, radiate.

67 But a few steps we there had tasted yet
When, as the shadows were now spent, we knew,
I and the Sages, that the Sun had set.

70 Before there came to be a single hue
O'er all the parts of the unbounded sky
And Night had grasped all that to her is due,

73 Chose each of us a step on which to lie;
Because the nature of the hill, too weak
Made now our power, though the will would fly.

As goats that grow, while ruminating meek
(Before they had their fill, rapid and bold
They had been roving on from peak to peak):
Noiseless, while shines the sun, the shade they hold,
The while their shepherd bends upon his stock
And still, thus bent, gives service to the fold;
And as the herdsman, by his quiet flock
Passes the night and makes the earth his cot,
Thus watching lest some beast should run amuck—
Like such were then the three of us—methought;
Like goat I was and were like shepherds they
All hence and thence enwrapped by that high grot.
Beyond the walls my sight had little sway,
But in that little, brighter than their use
And larger still, I could the stars survey.
While, watching them, on past events I muse,
Conquered I am by sleep, sleep that before
The facts come true, oft apprehends the news.
The hour, I think, when from the eastern shore
First o'er the Mountain Venus shone, whose gleam
Her ancient fire of love yet seems to store,
Beauteous and young I seemed to see in dream
A woman picking flowers upon a land,
Who sang, and of her song this was the theme:
"Let everyone who may my name demand
Know me as Leah: here I move and there,
To fashion me a wreath, my gentle hand.
To please me at the mirror, I prepare
Myself; my sister Rachel all day's space
Sits at her mirror, ne'er with other care.

She's fond of looking in her eyes' sweet grace
As I of decking me with my own hands:
To work makes me content, and her, to gaze."
And now the splendors that ere dawn advance
And to the pilgrims when less far they bide
Returning home, the more their joy enhance,
Were chasing darkness off on every side,
And went with it my sleep; I then arose
As the great Masters risen I descried.
"That fruit sweet-flavored for which searching goes
The mortals' craving, o'er so many trees,
This day shall to thy hunger bring repose."
The words that Virgil used with me were these,
And never were by man such gifts obtained
Which in an equal measure could him please.
Such great new will to be above I gained
Upon my will, that with each forward pace
I felt my flight by stronger wings sustained.
When we had covered all of the staircase
Below, and on the topmost step we stood,
Good Virgil fixed his eyes into my face:
"Temporal fire"—he said—"my son, hast view'd,
And that eternal; thou comest to such a part
Where for myself to see no more I could.
I led thee here with intellect and art:
The steep inclines, the narrow paths are gone;
Thy further road let now thy pleasure chart.
See now in front of thee how shines the sun:
See the soft grass, the shrubs, the flowers so fine
Which of itself alone this soil has spun.

'Mid them thou now may'st go or here recline.
To word or sign from me be not intent
Ere come the eyes where joy and beauty shine
By whose warm tears to thee I have been sent;
Will-power in thee is sound and straight and free:
Here would go wrong who followed not his bent.
Hence o'er thyself I crown and miter thee."

Line 1—Sunset in Purgatory means dawn at Jerusalem (where suffered Christ, the Sun's master), midnight in Spain (the stars of the Scales over the Ebro) and noontime (nones) on Ganges.

8—"Blessed the pure of heart"—Evangelic Beatitude.

15—A murdered executed by being lowered in a hole to be then filled with sand.

37—Pyramus, mortally self-wounded when deceived into thinking Thysbe dead, opened his eyes when she called his name. The mulberry tree, at whose foot he shed his blood, henceforth bore red berries.

42—Beatrice's.

45—A child persuaded to do something by the promise of a fruit.

58—"Come, ye blessed by my Father"—Christ's words to the saved souls at the last Judgment.

63—Due East: the poet's body blocked the rays of the setting sun.

74—No ascent is possible in Purgatory at night.

94—Dawn was near.

100, etc.—Leah, sister of Rachel, both wives of Jacob. The former, symbol of active life, the latter of contemplative. Leah gathers flowers (good works) to find pleasure in God's eyes; Rachel never leaves the contemplation of God (the mystical mirror).

109—The sky-whiteness preceding dawn. The nearer to his home is a returning pilgrim, the greater his joy for the new day.

115—True happiness.

127—That of Purgatory and that of Hell.

132—Impossible now to go wrong.

136—Beatrice.

142—I place upon thee the insignia of power (crown and miter); thou art full master of thyself.

CANTO XXVIII

ARGUMENT

Dante—with his companions—is now in the Terrestrial Paradise. Advancing to the border of a stream, he sees on the other side a woman who proves to be Matelda. She explains to him various features of the place.

Eager to seek within and o'er its spread
The thick, bright-colored, heavenly forest-land
Which tempered to the eyes the light new-shed,
Waiting no further time, I left the strand
And moved on the champaign, with gait quite slow,
Smelling the scents that rose on every hand.
An air sweet-scented, wafted in a flow
Which had no change, upon my forehead played—
No harder than fair breeze I felt its blow,
Wherefore the boughs which easy-shaken swayed,
All toward that part inclined, with even bend,
Where throws the holy hill its morning shade;
Yet not diverging from their upward trend
That birdlets poised upon the topmost sprays
Would not in singing all their art expend.

Indeed they, full of joy, their trills did raise
Welcoming the fresh breeze, among the boughs
Which a harmonious chord played to their lays,
Such as the waving branches oft arouse
In the pine trees on Chiassi's shore, whene'er
To South Wind Aeolus free rein allows.
I had already gone—with steps but rare—
Far in that ancient wood so that I knew
No more, by looking, whence I entered there.
When lo! there blocked my going further through
A stream that leftward wound its narrow tide
Bending the grass that on its margins grew.
Even the clearest waters on this side
Would seem to hold some mixture in their flow
Compared with those that naught in them may hide,
However darkling quite their ripples go
Beneath the timeless shade that e'er denies
To Sun and Moon their light therein to throw.
My feet stood still, but further went my eyes
Beyond the stream, to view—by wonder fraught—
The many and varied May-fresh greeneries.
And there appeared to me, as something caught
By sudden vision which puts to rout,
Through the surprise it gives, all other thought,
A woman, all alone, who moved about
Lilting a song and choosing bloom from bloom
From those that over all her path stood out.
—"Pray, beauteous Lady whom the rays illume
Of Heav'n—if from thy traits I well conceit,
Which witness to the heart 'tis fair assume—

"May it please thee to move ahead thy feet"—
I said to her—"to this stream's bordering,
That I may understand thy song so sweet.
Proserpina dost thou to memory bring
Such as she was and where, when separate
She was from mother and the blosmy spring."—
As may a dancer on herself rotate
—Plants pressed on ground together—and advance
Foot hardly in front of foot, in mincing gait,
Thus on the yellow and ruddy flowers, at once
She turned herself toward me, not otherwise
Than maid who lowers her modest countenance,
And to my prayers she gave the wishéd prize
Coming so close that of her singing suave
The inner meaning now I could cognize.
Soon as she reached where, by the tranquil wave
The grass upon the bank is overrun,
The boon of lifted eyes to me she gave.
I think that never such a splendor shone
'Neath Venus' lids, the time beyond all mode
She was transfixéd by her archer son.
Upon the other bank she stood, and glowed
Her smile, while with her hand the various-dyed
Blossoms she wove which bloom up there unsowed.
Perhaps the stream's barrier was three feet wide,
Yet for the place where Xerxes crossed the strait
—Still a restraint to swelling human pride—
Leander did not hold a greater hate
(The seas cut Sextus from Abidos' shore)
Than for the unopening pass I felt irate.

—"Ye here are new, and what my smile is for"—
Thus she began—"as I stand on this ground
Which to the human race was nest, of yore,
May keep you now by doubt and wonder bound,
But the Psalm DELECTASTI a light supplies
Which may disperse what clouds your mind surround.
Thou who comest first, whose prayers my steps entice,
Ask what else carest; I came with ready word
To all thy questions, as it might suffice."
—"The stream"—I said—"the sound of brakes bestirred
Against my recent faith seem here to plead
Since of this thing the contrary I heard."
She then: "I shall tell how those things proceed
Down from their cause and thus thy wonder ease,
Clearing the mists which thy mind's sight impede.
The Good Supreme who alone himself may please
Fashioned man good and bound to bliss for aye
Giving this place pledge of eternal peace.
Through his default, not long was here his day;
Through his default, to weeping and to woe
He turnéd honest laugh and heart-sweet play.
In order that what changes come below
From what the waters and the earth exhale
(And which after the heat e'er strives to go)
Could never war on man and bring travail,
This mount so lofty doth to heaven rear
And free it stands from where is barred the trail.
Now, since the circuit of the highest sphere
Doth in its motion all the air include
(If to its circling naught makes a barrier),

Such motion strikes the Mountain's altitude
All sheer and loosened in the living air
And, for its foliage thick, murmurs the wood.
Such power possess the plants thus buffetéd
That in the air a virtue they pour forth
Which, in the turning, all around is shed.
Hence earthly lands, according to their worth—
For soil or clime—this or that virtue attract
And so to varied plants are giving birth.
This from you men no wonder should exact—
Once this is learnt—if rooted there are found
Plants of whose seed a visual proof is lacked.
This also thou must know; this hallowed ground
Where thou art standing, ev'ry seed contains,
And fruits not plucked down yonder, here abound.
The stream thou see'st comes not out of such veins
Whose flow the vapor changed by frost restores
(As river loses fullness or regains)
But issues from a staid and certain source
To which God's will that much again concedes
As much as opened on two sides it pours.
With such a virtue on this side it speeds
That remembrance of sin it makes all blank:
Wakes, on the other, memory of good deeds.
Here Lethe is called; upon its other flank
Eunoe: and its charm it ne'er bestows
Save when a man both of its waters drank.
Than this no rarer taste men's custom knows,
And though, forsooth, thy thirst for knowledge be
Already quenched, did I naught else disclose—

I graciously shall add a corollary;
Nor do I think my words shall please thee less
If I enlarge on what I promised thee.
Those who the Golden Age's happiness
Have sung of old, perhaps thought of this glade
When dreaming of Parnassus' loveliness;
Guiltless the human root herein was laid;
Here timeless spring; all fruits the branches raise;
The nectar which all sing is here purveyed."—
Here backward my whole body I turned, to face
My Lords, and noticed they could not refrain
From smiling when they heard her ending phrase.
Then to the beauteous Lady I turned again.

CANTO XXVIII

Line 3—The light of the new day.

12—Westward.

20—The pine forest of Chiassi, near Ravenna, on the Adriatic shore.

21—Aeolus, the fabled King of the Winds.

28—On earth.

40—This lady (named Matelda later, Purg. XXXIII, 119) is the celebrated Countess Matelda (died 1115 A. D.) who was of great assistance to the Popes and did much for the Church. She is used as a symbol of active life and in the preceding Canto was prefigured, in Dante's dream, by Leah.

49—Prosperpina was carried away by Pluto, while she was gathering flowers in her garden.

65—When Venus was most deeply pierced by Cupid's arrows (Cupid was her son) and fell in love with Adonis.

70, etc.—The Hellespont (Dardanelles) was crossed by Xerxes to invade Greece. Leander had to swim across it (from Sextus to Abidos) in order to meet his loved Hero.

76, etc.—Matelda's smile is explained by her rejoicing in the beauties of creation, sung in the Psalm "Delectasti" (XCII) "For thou, O Lord, hast made me glad through thy works."

84—Dante had heard (Purg. XXI, 43) that no mutation took place on the Mountain.

99—Vapors exhaled by soil and water strive to go after the heat; that is, they rise toward the sun.

100—The Mountain was made so high that from the entrance to Purgatory (where the trail is barred) nothing could rise to trouble man in the Terrestrial Paradise.

103—But the air surrounding the earth moves around—as a mass—with the motion of the highest (the ninth) heaven and strikes—always evenly—the top of the Mountain.

115—Given the spreading of seeds from the plants of the T. P. it is no wonder that "there" (on earth) should grow plants from seeds unknown to men.

122—Rain.

126—This river has a mouth at each opposite end.

130—Lether, or 'Oblivion'; Eunoe', or 'Fair Memory.'

147—The final reference to poetical myths distorting the story of the Terrestrial Paradise makes Statius and Virgil smile.

CANTO XXIX

ARGUMENT

Dante proceeds on this side of Lethe keeping pace with Matelda, on the opposite bank. A magnificent procession appears in front of him, symbolical of the history of the Church.

Singing anew as an enamored maid,
After her former words she thus went on:
"Blest those upon whose sins a cloak is laid."

And as the nymphs who did all partners shun
Roaming the shaded woods (and some were bent
To seek, and others to avoid, the sun),

She then moved on against the stream, and went
Along the shore: with her I moved apace
Making my steps like her small steps distent.

Her feet and mine had not yet gone the space
Of five scores steps when with both shores the brook
Turned even: to the East was now my face.

And then not many further steps we took
When turned to me the maiden wholly about
And said: "My brother, listen now and look."

And lo! a sudden splendor ran throughout
Every portion of the wood widespread,
And of a lightning raised in me the doubt.

But since a lightning comes and soon is dead,
While this endured and shone yet more and more:
'What is this thing?' in wordless thought I said.

And a sweet stream of melody rushed o'er
The luminous air—and I, for that, inveighed
With righteous zeal, 'gainst Eve's defy of yore.

For there where earth and heaven gladly obeyed,
Woman—alone and freshly from her mold—
Yet strove, rebellious, the last veil evade.

While, had she humbly endured beneath that fold
I would have all those joys ineffable
Felt, first and afterwards, for time untold.

I move amidst such pleasures that foretell
The timeless joys—confused, while yet I long
For other raptures that will these excel.

And there in front, 'neath the green boughs o'erhung,
The air becomes for us like burning fire
And the sweet sound reveals itself a song.

"O Virgins sacrosanct, if hunger dire,
Vigils and colds I suffered serving you,
Reason I have my guerdon to require.

Let Helicon for me now pour its dew,
Let with her choir Urania make me bold:
Things hard for thought I must in rhymes construe."

A little further, seven trees of gold
Appeared, though falsely, for clear sight was barred
By the long tract twixt us and them unrolled;

CANTO XXIX

But when so close on them I could regard
That on the common object—where oft strays
Our sense—no trait was by the distance marred,

The virtue which the course of reason lays
Knew those with certain sight as chandeliers
And knew the voices an 'Hosanna' raise.

Above, the fair array was shining bright
Much more than e'en the moon's own loveliness
Midway her month, in the serene midnight.

I turned to my good Virgil, in the stress
Of my surprise and wonder: he replied
While wonder in his face appeared no less.

To those high things I turned back, eager-eyed,
And they moved on toward us at pace so slow,
They would have been o'erstepped by novel bride.

The woman chided me: "Why such a glow
Of love for those bright things in thee now shines
And on what follows dost no look bestow?"

I saw then people coming in long lines
As after leaders—all in white arrayed:
Ne'er was such whiteness seen in earth's confines.

The river at my left its gleam displayed
And back to me sent my left flank as would
A mirror, when my eyes on it I laid.

When on my border of the stream I stood
So that the stream was all the distance, there
I halted, so my sight naught might elude.

And thence I saw that each advancing flare
Left in the sky behind a colored train
Whose semblance to brush-strokes I might compare.

Thus there above remained distent a lane
Sevenfold, colored with such varied hue
Whence makes the Sun his bow, Delia her mane.
The trailing pennons spread beyond my view
Their end, and if my sense false did not play
Only ten steps were twixt the foremost two.
Under such beauteous sky as I portray
Twenty-four Elders crowned with Fleur-de-lys
In double line advanced, in stately array.
And rose from all a singing: "Blest thou be
Among all Adam's daughters; and so blest
Be thy magnificence, eternally."
When on the shore across from where at rest
I stood, the flowers and the fresh grassy mead
No longer by that chosen throng were pressed,
As light doth after light in heaven tread,
Four animals appeared who followed close—
With verdant boughs each of them garlandéd.
The pinions of six wings their body shows:
The feathers full of eyes—and Argus' eyes
(Were they alive) would haply be like those.
I spend no further rhymes to limn their guise,
Reader: another purchase in my mind
Urges me so that I must stint this price.
But in Ezechiel see them designed
As he saw them out of the cold north sphere
Coming amidst great fire and clouds and wind.
As thou shalt find within his pages, here
Such was their shape, but of their pinions John
Speaks otherwise, and I to him adhere.

Within the space amid the four there shone
A car triumphal on two wheels sustained;
By force of neck a Griffon drew it on.
Upwards he held both of his pinions trained
Beneath the middle band, three and three between,
So that, thus cleft, all still intact remained.
So high they reached to be no longer seen;
Where he was bird, of gold his members were;
The rest white colored mingléd with red sheen.
Not Africanus nor Augustus e'er
Delighted Rome with such a chariot;
By it, the Sun's would seem a pallid glare.
The Sun's, which burned when from its way distraught
Due to the prayer of the Earth devout
The time when Jove unfathomed justice wrought.
Three women circling the right wheel about
Came dancing on: the first appeared so red
That in the fire her presence one would doubt.
On flesh and bones the next one imagéd
Such things that out of emerald are hewn:
The third was candid as a fresh snow-bed.
The white now led, but to the ruddy soon
Yielded her turn; the others slacked their stride
Or quickened, keeping with the leader's tune.
Four maids, in purple dressed, by the left side
Stepped merrily, while following the lead
Of one of them whose forehead was three-eyed.
Past all so far described I saw proceed
Two Elders, equal in their act austere
And noble, though their garments disagreed.

And one of them in semblance was a peer
Of that supreme Hippocrates whom bore
Nature to tend her animals most dear.

Contrary care the other's semblance wore:
A gleaming, pointed sword was in his hands
Which frightened me though standing on this shore.

Four more I saw, of humble countenance;
And, after all alone an old man came
Absorbed, as one who things far distant scans.

And of these seven was the attire the same
As that of the first group, but 'round their head
Showed not of lilies such a candid frame;

Roses they wore and flowers of vivid red:
One would have sworn—at distance e'en not long—
Above their lids a wreath of flames was spread.

And when in front of me the car had swung,
I heard a thunder: aught seemed to preclude
All further progress to that noble throng,

And with the leading pennons there they stood.

Line 3—From Psalm XXI, 1. All the "P's" on Dante's forehead have now been erased. All his sins forgiven.

12—The brook remained of the same width.

24—I blamed Eve for having defied God's command, and having lost for mankind that beautiful place.

27—To evade the only prohibition in the Terrestrial Paradise (the forbidden fruit).

28—The fold of the above mentioned veil, or prohibition.

30—First, during life in the body; afterwards, as a spirit.

33—The raptures of celestial beatitude.

36—The "sweet melody" mentioned above.

CANTO XXIX

37—The Muses; the poet asks his due reward now, needing all their help.

40, 41—The Muses dwelt on Mount Helicon: Urania is the Muse of celestial lore.

46—The "common object" is the general appearance which a thing has in common with many others; it becomes individualized when the particular traits of the thing reach clearly the sense.

49—The perceptive faculty which gives to reason the material on which to build its conclusions.

50—Symbols of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

57—Even Virgil was here overwhelmed.

61—Matelda.

78—The rainbow; the halo of the moon.

83—Symbols of the 24 books of the Old Testament. It is not possible in these short Notes to explain all the symbolism of the Procession in detail.

86—The Angel's salutation to Mary.

90—They had turned at an angle.

91—As star follows star.

92—The Four Gospels.

98—I must spend my rhymes to purchase other things (to describe other subjects) hence I must limit the expenditure here.

100, etc.—Ezechiel, I, 4; John (Apoc. IV, 7, 8) describes the animals with six wings, Ezechiel with four.

107, etc.—The Church, drawn by Christ, symbolized in the mythical Griffon, half lion, half eagle (two natures).

109—The middle trail of the chandeliers remained between the upward wings of the Griffon; the seven trails though divided, were intact.

118—Parched by the Sun's chariot foully driven by Phoeton, the Earth prayed to Jove who destroyed car and driver.

121—Faith, Hope and Charity: red, green and white.

130—Temperance, Fortitude, Justice, Prudence: the last one has three eyes as more far seeing.

133, etc.—Saint Luke, a physician, as author of the Acts of the Apostle. Saint Paul, as author of the Epistles.

138—Men.

142—Symbols of the Epistles of John, Peter, James and Judas.

143—The Apocalypse (St. John).

145—White, as that of the first 24 Elders.

CANTO XXX

ARGUMENT

On the symbolical chariot, Beatrice appears to Dante, while at the same time, Virgil disappears. She arraigns him for the sins of his past life.

When the pole-stars which the first heaven light
And never set and never rose, and ne'er
By any veil but sin's were made less bright—
And which the conduct of each person there
Directed, as the ones below disclose
The way to helmsman seeking harbor fair—
Stopped and stood still, the truthful people, those
Who first had come—twixt flames and Griffon strown—
Turned to the car as if to their repose.
And one who seemed dispatched from Heaven's throne:
'VENI SPONSA DE LIBANO' sang forth
Three times, the others echoing his tone.
As will the blesséd from the covering earth
Be quick to rise when the last trumpet plays,
Singing the hallelujah of their new birth,

Thus from the godly litter, in my gaze,
A hundred rose AD VOCEM TANTI SENIS
Angels and ministers of Heaven's grace.
And said they all: "BENEDICTUS QUI VENIS,"
Then while—around and upward—flowers they threw:
"MANIBUS O DATE LILIA PLENIS."
I have seen often tinged with rose-like hue,
At day's beginning, the oriental shore
With the rest of the sky a cloudless blue
And the sun's face arise all clouded o'er
So that—the vapors tempering its powers—
For a long while my sight its vision bore.
Thus in the bosom of a cloud of flowers
(Which first up-thrown by hands of angels, down
Fell—within and without—in ample showers)
Wearing o'er candid veil an olive crown
A Lady appeared to me, mantled in green
And was like lively flame her flowing gown.
'Twas long already since my soul had been
O'erwhelmed by wonder as I tremblingly
Had gazed upon her countenance terrene;
Yet, though my eyes had lost their power to see,
Through hidden virtue which she did effund
I felt of my old love the potency.
Soon as I felt my eyes thus struck and stunned
By that high virtue which my heart had rent
Ere I had grown my childhood age beyond,
Leftward I turned myself, so confident
As to his mother child to be consoled
Whenever stung by fear or discontent,

CANTO XXX

To say to Virgil: "Not a dram I hold
Of blood not quivering: again has flamed—
I recognize its signs—the fire of old."

But Virgil had left us, had left us maimed
Of him, my Virgil, father passing dear,
Virgil through whom my soul had been reclaimed.

Nor all the ancient mother had lost here
Could keep my cheeks that now were clean of dew
From being lined by many a burning tear.

"Dante, though Virgil from thy side withdrew,
Weep not as yet, weep not as yet, for thou
Wounded by other sword shalt have to rue."

As admiral who roams from poop to prow
And men who other vessels have in care
Cheers so that they no shirking will allow,

Thus on the chariot's left baluster—
When I turned back on hearing called my name
—Which of necessity I here declare—

I saw intent across the stream the Dame
Who first appeared beneath th' angelic feast
And saw her fix in me her vision's aim.

And though the veil down from her head released
Beneath the garland of Minerva's green,
The clearness of her face for me decreased,

Displaying still a regal, haughty mien,
Continued she, as one whose words imply
That harsher words are still reserved within:

"Look well to us; in sooth Beatrice am I.
How didst thou dare approach this mountain grade—
Didst thou not know men here live happily?"

I bent my eyes down to the clear cascade,
But seeing there myself, the grass I sought:
Such heavy shame upon my forehead weighed.
As mother by her child too lordly is thought,
Thus she by me, and on my lips I found
Bitter her pity with such sternness fraught.
Her voice died out and rose the Angels' sound:
"IN TE SPERAVI DOMINE" they sang
But PEDES MEOS seemed to be their bound.
As on Italy's back snowdrifts o'erhang
The living beams, there to congeal and pack
Under the wind which from Slavonia sprang—
Into themselves they trickle, and their stack
Melts as a candle by its fire, when veers
The wind and blows from lands where shadows lack—
Thus I was 'reft of sighs as well as tears
Before they sang whose notes forever flow
Within the harmony of the eternal spheres;
But when in their sweet song I came to know
Their friendliness for me, more manifest
Than had they said: 'Why, Lady, chid'st him so?'
The frost that held my heart till now oppressed
Breath then became and water: painfully
Through mouth and eyes it issued from my breast.
On the car's shank already mentioned, she
Stood yet without a motion, but she spake
Unto the holy substances, this plea:
"Ye in this endless day are e'er awake
And thus no step of time along its course
Nor night nor sleep away from you may take;

CANTO XXX

Hence my reply concerns with greater force
The mind of him who cries, this stream beyond,
That equal to the guilt grow the remorse.
Not alone through the power the wheels effund
Of Heaven, and each seed to its purpose drive,
According as the stars may correspond,
But through the graces that from God derive
And are from vapors so high-gathered rained
That there to reach our visions vainly strive—
This man in his new life such state attained,
Virtually, that every righteousness
Would have in him a wondrous flowering gained,
But evil seeded lands and cultureless
Grow more malign and into wilder maze
As more of nature's vigor they possess.
A while some strength conceded him my face:
Showing my youthful eyes, I did instil
In him the power to follow righteous ways;
But when I found myself upon the sill
Of second age, and for true life mature—
To others, leaving me, he pledged his will.
When from the flesh I rose to spirit pure
My greater beauty and virtue grew less dear
To him, and held for him less power to lure.
And over truthless paths was his career:
False images of good set him a snare
Which to their promise never fully adhere.
Nor inspirations helped, which—gained by prayer—
In dream or otherwise to him I sent
To call him back; so little did he care.

So low he fell that every argument
For his own weal came short, save he be led
To see the souls in timeless punishment.
For this I gained the portals of the dead
And there to him, by whom he here was brought
Offered my prayer, the while sad tears I shed.
God's high decree would now be set at naught
If Lethe should be passed and if sweet food
Should be by him enjoyed, without the scot
Of penitence which but by tears is shewed."

CANTO XXX

Line 1, etc.—The chandeliers (gifts of the Holy Ghost) are like the pole-stars of the Empyrean directing the inhabitants of Heaven as the pole-stars of the world direct the navigators.

8—The 24 Elders.

10—The one—presumably—who represented the Canticle of Canticles from which the expression is taken: "Come from the Liban, o bride".

17, etc.—Angels; the Latin phrases are used by Dante as from a nobler language: "At the voice of such worthy old man"—"Blessed art thou who comest"—"Give ye lilies with full hands."

30—Within and without the Chariot.

31—Beatrice wearing the colors of Faith, Hope and Charity.

41—Dante had met Beatrice for the first time in his ninth year and had loved her since then.

52—All the beauties of the Terrestrial Paradise lost by Eve could not keep me from weeping.

65—Who had appeared amidst the flowers thrown by the Angels.

68—Olive branches; the olive tree was sacred to Minerva.

75—In the true happiness of innocence.

83—From Psalm XXX—"In thee, O Lord I have hoped"—which expresses confidence in the mercy of God. The first section of this Psalm ends with "pedes meos"—"in a spacious place thou hast set my feet."

86—The living trees on the Appennine ridge—sort of backbone of the Italian peninsula.

87—From the North-East.

90—Winds from the tropics, where the perpendicular sun casts no shades.

91, etc.—Thus my tears were congealed within me before the singing of the Angels.

103, etc.—"To you the course of human happenings is clear: I speak rather for his sake."

109, etc.—Not only through gifts of nature but through special graces.

115—"New" in the sense of "young."

116—Virtually, h. e. potentially.

125—When Beatrice was about 25 years old: she died at that age.

140—To Virgil.

145—Dante must show his earnest repentance.

CANTO XXXI

ARGUMENT

Dante acknowledges his faults, deeply touched with repentance. Matelda then leads him across Lethe making him taste its waters. The Poet now fully cleansed emerges on the other bank and sees Beatrice's face unveiled.

"O thou beyond the sacred stream"—again,
Turning the point of her discourse to me,
(Already its edge had caused to me such pain)
She spake—and came her sermon pauselessly:
"Tell, tell if this be true; to such accuse
Thy own confession now conjoined must be."
But then my virtue so had grown confuse,
The breathéd voice could not a word accent
But died before its organs let it loose.
Waiting a while: "What thoughts thy speech prevent?
Answer"—she said—"Not yet within thy mind
The sad remembrance by the stream is spent."
Confusion grew in me, with fear combined,
And both out of my mouth forced such a 'yes'
That it could be by sight alone divined.

As bow that falters if by chance the stress
Put on its cord and arc is all too great
(The shaft then strikes the mark with force much less)
Thus did I burst beneath the heavy weight,
And out of me but tears and sighs could pour
While slowly came the voice to find its gate.
And she: " 'Gainst thy desires for me that bore
Thy soul unto the love of that high good
Beyond which naught exists worth seeking for,
What ditches dug across, what chains withstood
Thy path, so that of progress further on
Failed thee the hope with which thou wast indued;
And what support, what favours to be won
Did in the semblance of the others shew
That to reach them no step wouldst thou then shun?"
After a deep and bitter sigh I drew,
Soon as my voice was strong for a reply,
(With effort could my lips a sound construe)
Weeping I said. "My steps were turned awry
By the false pleasures which I sought alone,
Soon as your traits were hidden from my eye."
And she: "Shouldst thou be silent or disown
What dost confess, naught is that might protect
And veil thy guilt, by such a judge 'tis known.
But when the sinner's cheeks frankly project
The sin's avowal, then the wheel shall turn
Against the edge: so doth our court direct.
Yet, so thy errors' shame in thee may burn
And so that, if again by sirens stirred,
Stronger be thou their luring call to spurn,

CANTO XXXI

Cast off the seed of tears, list to my word
And hear how thou elsewhere shouldst have been led
By the flesh that was mine, so soon interred.

Never by nature or by art were bred
For thee such beauties as the limbs so fair
Which clothéd me, on earth now scattered.

And if so failed for thee that joy most rare
When death took me, what other mortal thing
Could in its pleasures thus thy heart ensnare?

Thy duty was, when first didst feel the sting
Of the fallacious things, to rise on high—
And to myself, no longer such, to cling.

Should not have pulled thy wings so low to fly
Waiting for further blows, a little maid
Or other vanities that quickly die.

Young bird for two, three times is undismayed
But in the sight of the full-fledgéd game
In vain are shots discharged and nets are laid."

As children stand and listen, mute with shame,
Keeping meantime their eyes fixed to the ground,
Repentant and acknowledging their blame,

Like such I stood and she went on: "The sound
Of words grieves thee, but now thy beard upraise
And sight shall make thy grief e'en more abound."

No such resistance gives the rooted base
Of robust helm when wind from our own land
Or that of Jarba, pulls it from its place,

As when I raised my chin at her command;
And when the face she meant, naming the beard,
Well did I ken the barbéd reprimand.

Then, as with face uprist again I peered
Those first-created creatures I beheld
At rest, so that their flowers' cloud had cleared.
Then glimpsed my eyes (their mist not yet dispelled)
Beatrice turned upon the beast, wherein
In two joint natures one sole person dwelled.
Beneath her veil beyond the border green
She seemed e'en more excel her self of yore
Than o'er all others she, on earth, had been.
Repentance pricked in me so sharp a sore
That of all things, what more had made me stray
Unto its love, that now I hated more.
Conscience then smote my heart in such a way
That 'whelmed I fell; and what in me then passed
Well doth she know, in whom the reason lay.
The sense of outer things restored at last
The lady I saw who alone first came to sight,
Who stood o'er me and said: "Hold, hold me fast."
She drew me on into the river, quite
Up to my throat, and pulled me after her—
She moving o'er the waves, like shuttle, light—
When near the blesséd strand, I heard—of rare
Sweetness:—"ASPERGES ME." It is erased
From mind: to write of it, much less I dare.
Op'ning her arms, the beauteous lady embraced
My head and 'neath the waves held it, so long
That of the water I was forced to taste.
She drew me thence, and bathéd thus, among
The four fair dancers I was led, and they
Were covering me, each with an arm upflung.

"Stars in the heavens, here as nymphs we play;
Ere came Beatrice to the earth below
We were assigned as maids, by her to stay.
We lead far as her eyes but, to the glow
Of joy within, will sharpen thine, the three
Thou see'st there yon, whose gazes deeper go."
Thus singing they began, then they led me
Still in their midst, up to the Griffon's breast
Wherefrom Beatrice faced us regally.
They said: "Now to thy sight allow no rest;
Before those emeralds thou hast been led
Whence Love, of yore, to thee his darts addrest."
A thousand yearnings, warmer than the red
Flames, locked my eyes unto the gleaming eyes
Which still were on the Griffon rivetéd.
Like sun in mirror—and not otherwise—
Shone within them the double-shaped portent—
A while with one, then with its other guise.
Think, reader, what was then my wonderment
Seeing the thing which to itself kept true
The while its image such change underwent.
While in my soul both joy and wonder grew
And amply it fed upon that sustenance
Which sates, and yet brings on a thirst e'er new,
I saw those other three towards us advance.
Of rank excelse their acts gave truthful sign;
To their angelic tune they kept their dance.
"Turn, Beatrice, turn thy sight divine
Upon thy liege"—thus they in song appealed—
"Who, to see thee, o'er such long road did pine.

Graciously give us grace so that revealed
Be unto him thy mouth, that he discern
The second beauty within thee concealed."
O splendor of the vivid light eterne!
Whoever did beneath Parnassus' shade
Grow pale, or of its wells the taste did learn,
Whose mind would not feel dull and heavy-weighed
If he should try to limn thy aspect there
Where heaven's harmonies around thee played,
Bright as thou didst appear in that bright air?

Line 2—Speaking to me more directly.
7—Virtue, h. e. powers, physical and mental.
12—Lethe had not yet obliterated the memory of sins.
22, etc.—What obstacles didst thou find against thy quest for me which was leading thee to God?
28, etc.—And what didst thou expect from the other "goods" (material pleasures)?
37—Thy concealing or denying would be useless, as all is known by the 'Judge', God.
40—Frank confession blunts the edge of the sword of Justice.
46—Cast off, for the moment, the thought of sin, seed of thy tears.
55—The sorrow at Beatrice's death.
57—No longer fallacious because immortal.
59—Blows of fortune.
62—Adult birds are wary.
27—Jarba's reign was in North Africa. Jarba lived in Aeneas' time.
74—It was an allusion to his adult age.

77—The Angels (first-created beings) had ceased from throwing flowers.

86—I hated most what I had followed with greatest—and most sinful—love.

90—Beatrice knows, who was the cause, with her beauty, of my swooning.

92—Matelda.

98—"Sprinkle me... with hyssop, etc." Formula used by the Church when a blessing with holy water is given.

104—The four women (Purg. XXIX, 130) at the left wheel of the Chariot. The four Cardinal Virtues.

106—The same symbol is expressed by the four stars Dante has seen at his arrival on the Mountain. (Purg. I, 23).

107—The Four Virtues were handmaiden to Beatrice in her life terrene.

109—But to the joy 'within' Beatrice's eyes, thy own eyes will be sharpened (made strong) by the three other women—the three theological Virtues. (Those at the right wheel of the Chariot).

116—The 'emeralds' are the eyes of Beatrice.

119—Of Beatrice.

121, etc.—Now the eagle part of the Griffon, now the lion part was reflected into the eyes of Beatrice, who, as Divine Knowledge, must comprehend the double nature of Christ (the symbolical Griffon).

130—Faith, Hope, Charity: the other three dancing maids.

137—So far the eyes of Beatrice had been unobstructed to the Poet's sight: the lower part of her face was still veiled.

140, etc.—What poet—even one who long inhabited Parnassus and drank its waters—could describe that 'splendor eternal' when all clearly revealed.

CANTO XXX

CANTO XXXII

ARGUMENT

The Poet witnesses other extraordinary happenings: the Griffon, after tying the Chariot to a great tree, disappears with most of the Procession. Certain transformations take place in the Chariot.

So did I keep my sight fixed and intent
To quench my ten-years thirst unsoothéd yet
That all my other feelings were quite spent.
And on both sides of them like wall was set
Indifference: that smile so full of grace
So hard inveigled them with its old net.
But at this moment, forcibly my gaze
Leftward was turnéd by those Goddesses
As this I heard from them: "Too fixed thy face."
And by that disposition whence distress
Comes over eyes that by the sun are burned
A while my sight was rendered visionless.
But when again on little I had learned
To gaze (on 'little' I do say, beside
That 'much' wherefrom I forcibly was turned)

I saw veer to the right and forward stride
The glorious army, facing toward the sun
And with the row of seven flames as guide.

As troop in danger, not to be undone,
Beneath the shields reverses self and sign
Until the turning move is fully spun,

E'en so the soldiers of the realm divine
Marched, and had gone past us all their long train
Before the chariot's team began incline.

Then to the wheels the ladies stepped again,
And into motion his high load restored
The Griffon, while no plume throbbed with the strain.

The beauteous dame—my helper at the ford—
Statius and I kept by the wheel which drove
An arc, in turning, with the smaller chord.

Thus we went through the high unpeopled grove
—(She who believed the serpent caused this blight)—
Timed by a melody the Angels wove.

Haply such space may cover in its flight
A dart three times released, as we had gone
Ahead, and then I saw Beatrice alight.

"Adam!"—such murmur came from everyone;
They circled then around a plant so bare
No flower or bough did show, its limbs upon.

The higher goes its trunk, the more its hair
Spreads wide around, and its high reach would make
The Indians, in their woods, for wonder stare.

"Blesséd art, since thy beak doth shun to break,
O Griffon, aught from that sweet-savored wood
For thence the belly turned in writhing ache."

CANTO XXXII

Thus 'round the tree robust the others stood
Singing, and cried the animal two-fold:
"Thus is preserved the seed of sanctitude."

Turned to the car that he thereto had rolled
He drew it near the widowed timber's base
Leaving it tied to it, in its limbs' hold.

As do our earthly plants touched by the blaze
Falling from the great light, with which combine—
From back of Heaven's Mullet—other rays:

Turgid they grow; on each there comes to shine
Again its color, ere the sun has set
Its steeds to run 'neath other starry sign.

Less faint than rose, more bright than violet,
Budding in color, was the plant renewed
Whose branches had so stark remained as yet.

A hymn now rose, past all my ken—nor could
Be sung on earth those people's melodies—
Nor e'en a measure whole my sense withstood.

Could I depict how those ferocious eyes
When Syrinx' tale was told, to sleeping fell
(Being more wakeful cost those eyes such price),

Like painter from a living parallel
I would my dozing limn with proper stroke—
But let who will, paint such a slumbering well.

Therefore I pass to when I sudden woke
Hearing a call: "Arise, what sloth lulls thee?"
Amidst a glow that my sleep's curtain broke.

As once, to glimpse the flowerets of the tree
Whose fruit the Angels crave and whence is fed
The marriage-feast of heav'n eternally,

Peter and John and James apart were led
And 'whelmed—then they came to at that word's sound
By which of deeper sleeps was cut the thread—
And in their group diminishéd they found
That Moses and Elias were no more
While was in changéd robe their Master gowned—
Thus to myself I came, and bending o'er
My form I saw the piteous One, my guide
Who first had led my steps along the shore.
And all in doubt: "Where is Beatrice?" I cried;
And she: "Behold, she sits on that root there
Beneath the boughs from its new blooming dyed.
Behold the company surrounding her;
While singing in a sweeter, deeper mode
The rest, back of the Griffon, upward fare."
I know not whether more protracted flowed
Her words; for now she held my eyes in thrall
Who to my sense had closed all other road.
On the stark earth she sat, alone—in all
Like one left there as guardian of the car
Erstwhile drawn by the two-fold animal.
The seven nymphs stood as in circling bar
'Round her; and in their hands those luminaries
Which Aquilo or Auster cannot jar.
"After thou shalt a while have dwelt in this
Forest, with me thou shalt be citizen
E'er of that Rome where Christ a Roman is.
Still, for the sake of the ill living men,
Watch close the car and what thou see'st transpire,
Once back on earth, all of it boldly pen."

Thus Beatrice; and I whose sole desire
Was to be humble at her orders' feet,
Turned mind and vision as she did require.
Never descended with such motion fleet
Out of thick cloud a fire whene'er the rain
Falls whence the vapors have their farthest seat,
As I saw plunging Jove's bird sovereign
Along the tree, and of its bark he tore
And of its flowers and of its fresh green mane.
Then 'gainst the car with all his strength he bore
So that it bent, as ship by tempest hit
—Wave-tossed, to lee or windward leaning o'er.
And then I saw a Fox that toward the pit
Of the triumphal car took a great spring:
He seemed to have ne'er touched of food that's fit.
But my fair Lady, harshly challenging
His filthy sins, turned him to such a flight
As may stand bones to which no muscles cling.
After, from where at first he did alight,
Rushed down the Eagle to the chariot's ark,
Of his own feathers leaving it bedight.
Then as from heart oppressed by heavy cark
Thus spoke a voice that sounded from the blue:
"How art ill-laden, thou, my little bark!"
And then the earth appeared to yawn and spew
—Between the wheels—a dragon to attack
The car; and with his tail he pierced it through.
And, as a wasp that pulls its needle back,
Dragging his evil tail, from the car's bed
He drew and wandered off in aimless track.

What was left there, as fertile earth with spread
Of grass, thus with those plumes—perchance
For sound and goodly purpose offeréd—
Covered itself; and thus the pole's expanse
Was clothéd and both wheels: so quick 'twas done
That longer takes one sigh for utterance.
The hallowed structure, having undergone
Such change, put forth some heads—its length throughout—
Three o'er the pole and in each corner one.
Ox-horns upon the first were seen to sprout;
But only one horn in front the four extolled:
Such monster ne'er was seen, the earth about.
Secure as fortress on a mountain hold
Sitting on it a harlot loosely drest
Appeared to me—with roving eyes and bold.
And by her side, so that no one could wrest
The wench from him, a giant stood upright—
Together, now and then—their lips were prest.
But when her greedy and wide-roving sight
On me she turnéd, the ferocious swain
Flailed her from head to foot with cruel might.
Then full of jealousy, with rage insane,
Loosing the monster, through the forest drew't
So that for me that only did remain
Screen to the whore and the new-fashioned brute.

CANTO XXXII

Line 2—Beatrice had died in 1290; Dante's journey was, fictionally, in the year 1300.

4—And even my eyes could only look straight ahead.

8—The three Virtues who were escorting the Poet.

13—I was able to look on 'little'—this was 'little' in comparison with the 'very much' which had turned me aside.

25—As they were in Purg. XXIX, 121, 132.

27—Indicating easy motion.

29—The right hand wheel, as the movement was on the right flank.

32—Eve caused the desertion of Terrestrial Paradise.

36—From the Chariot.

37, etc.—They call 'Adam' because this is the Tree of Life which rose in the middle of Eden.

42—The Indians have tall trees but they would wonder at this one.

43—The Griffon does not touch the sweet-savored tree, from which Adam (man) turned away, after eating its fruit, to suffer unending pain.

48—Answer of the Griffon: "Thus (by not touching the tree) is preserved the principle of Justice." Perhaps it means 'by humility.'

50—The 'widowed timber' is the Tree bare of all fruits and branches, after Adam's sin.

51—Pliable branches of the Tree are used to tie the Chariot.

52—In the Spring: then the great light (of the Sun) combines with the rays of the constellation Aries, which is back (comes after) that of the Pisces (Heaven's Mullet).

57—Before the Sun combines with another constellation.

58—Dark red (the color of blood). Probably indicating the death of Christ through which the Church was tied to the Tree of Life.

63—The Poet swooned.

64—The hundred eyes of Argus: he was lulled to sleep by Mercury who told him the tale of the loves of Syrinx and Pan. (68) Mercury killed Argus to evade his watchful eyes.

67—Dante renounces to depict his own dozing off—let whoever can, do it.

73, 76—The Apostles were led aside to witness the Transfiguration: a glimpse of that Glory which is the nutriment of the Angels, etc.

77—At the voice of Christ which had called even dead people to life.

83—Matelda.

87—Reddened by its new budding.

88—See below: line 97.

91—Matelda may have spoken longer, but the Poet's eyes were fixed on Beatrice who had dulled all his other senses.

98—The Chandeliers: no wind may affect them (no earthly power).

102—The Holy City of Heaven.

110—Lightning from a cloud in the highest possible region—close to the sphere of fire (scholastic cosmology).

112, 115—The Eagle (Empire) strikes the Car (Church); a symbol of the early persecutions of Christianity.

118—Early heresy. Chased by Beatrice (Divine Knowledge).

126—The Eagle's feathers on the Chariot mean the material possessions given by the Empire to the Church (Constantine).

130—The voice of Peter, the Fisherman.

131—The Dragon signifies the Eastern Schism.

136—The Western Church assummed more and more temporal power, until it became (143) the monster described in Revelation. See also Inf. XIX, 109.

146—The four heads at the corners of the Chariot.

149—Symbol of the Roman Curia in Dante's time.

152—The King of France, then dominating the policy of the Church.

155—As the Harlot turned to Dante—flirted, that is, with the Imperial idea, the Giant took her away. (The King of France persuaded the Pope to leave Rome for Avignon).

160—The new monster (the feathered Chariot) was hidden by the forest.

CANTO XXXIII

ARGUMENT

Beatrice prophesies the not distant restauration of the Church, and the punishment of those who have done harm to her; Dante walks on abreast with Beatrice until, reaching Eunoe, he drinks of its waters. He is now ready to rise to Heaven.

DEUS VENERUNT GENTES; now the three
And now the four—'mid tears—began to sing
In mode alternate, such sweet psalmody;
And Beatrice there stood listening,
Head bowed and sighing so that little more
Changed Mary by the gibbet sorrowing.
But when the other virgin maids forbore,
Yielding to her, upon her feet stood she
Erect, her face like fire all colored o'er:
—"Short time shall pass and ye shall not see me,
And afterwards, dear sisters mine"—she said—
"Short time shall pass and then ye shall see me."—
She caused all seven then to move ahead,
And after her she urged, with but a sign,
The woman, me, the Sage who tarried.

Thus she proceeded, and, as I opine,
Not yet upon the ground had left its trace
Her tenth step, when her eyes transfixéd mine.
And friendly looking:—"Come at faster pace"—
She said—"so when thou art by me addressed
Thou have for listening a better place."—
When, properly, I was with her abreast:
—"Brother"—she spoke to me—"why darést not,
Walking with me, to make thy wish expressed?"—
As haps to men by reverence o'erwrought
When they, in presence of their betters, speak
And their live voice ne'er to their lips is brought,
Thus happed to me: with broken voice and weak:
—"What is my need, my Lady"—I thus began—
"You know full well, and what from you I seek."—
And she:—"The net which fear and shame bespan
'Round thee, I will that now thou break and shake,
And speak no longer like a dreaming man.
Know that the vessel sundered by the snake
Was, and is not; but to the guilty I say
That all their soups cannot God's justice break.
Not all the time without an heir shall stay
That Eagle whose foul plumes became the car's,
Whence it was made a monster and then prey.
For I see plainly, hence I speak, the stars
Setting the time—and they shall soon arrive—
Secure from all obstructions and all bars,
When a Five Hundred, with a Ten and Five,
A messenger of God, shall kill the hind,
The Giant, too, who doth with her connive.

46 Haply my sermon rather clouds the mind
Like Sphinx or Themis, less convincing thee
For it shuts reason, e'en as did their kind.

49 But the stark facts the Naiades shall be
Who this enigma's hardness soon shall clear,
Nor crops nor beasts shall pay for it the fee.

52 Note thou, and as these words from me dost hear,
Teach them to those whom life holds yet engripped
(The life which is but rush to death's barrier).

55 And keep in mind, when putting them in script,
Not to conceal how looked that plant which twice
Has here been shown to thee so foully stripped.

58 Whoever robs or splinters it, defies
With blasphemy of fact the will of God
Who made it holy and, for his use, to rise.

61 For biting it, by pain and longing gnawed
Five thousand years and more, the first soul yearned
For Him who for that bite paid with his blood.

64 Thy wit were sleeping, if thou hast not learned
The special cause that makes that plant attain
Such height, the while its top is downward turned.

67 And had not been like Elsa's waves the vain
Thoughts 'round thy mind, and thy delight thereon
Like Pyramus who gave the tree new stain,

70 Such circumstances were enough, alone,
To prove to thee, as moral certainty,
That God's high justice in that ban is shown.

73 But now because thy intellect I see
Become a stone and of a petrous hue
So that my sermon's splendor dazzles thee,

My words within thy mind—or written through
Or in some image I want thee to bear
For what on pilgrim's staff palms wreathed shew."—
And I replied: "Like sealing wax that ne'er
Transmutes the figure once in it 'tis dight,
Thus henceforth shall my brain your marking wear.
But why your wished-for words, beyond my sight
So far are soaring that e'en as I make
A harder effort, less I match their flight?"—
—"In order thou may'st know the school"—she spake—
"Which thou hast followed, and thus know how far
Its doctrine follows in my sermon's wake;
And that your way and the celestial are
So far apart as from your earth below
The fastest heaven is dissimilar."—
Wherefore I spoke:—"My memory doth not know
That from your teachings I did ever stray,
Nor stings my conscience for my doing so."—
—"If that upon thy mind now fails to weigh,
Recall"—and with her words a smile was blent—
"That Lethe's waters thou hast drunk today.
And if of fire the smoke is argument,
From thy forgetfulness one must conclude
The guilt of thy desires to else intent.
But I shall henceforth of all cloaks denude
My words, as far as to thy feeble gaze
It may be proper to have them so shewed."—
And more coruscant and of slower pace
The Sun now held of day the middle route,
Which, as one looks, has here and there its place,

CANTO XXXIII

When stood the seven as would stop a scout
Who leads a troop and marches in the van,
Seeing aught new, or hint of it, about,

Right on the border of a shadow wan
Such as beneath green leaves and branches gaunt
Throws on the cold Alp streams its darkling span.

There Tigris and Euphrates flow in front
Of them I saw—both in one spring combined—
And part their streams so slowly as friends are wont.

—"O light, O glory of all human kind,
What water this that gushes from one spring
And in two currents then is self-assigned?"—

—"Pray"—to my prayer I heard her answering—
"Matelda to tell thee"—and here replied
(As falsely charged, one might retort the sting)

The beauteous Lady:—"This I clarified
To him, and other things; I hold for sure
That Lethe's stream did not this matter hide."—

And Beatrice:—"Haply greater lure
Which often memory deprives of power
Has made his understanding's eyes obscure.

But yon see Eunoe stream through this bower;
Lead him to it and as it is thy use
Do so his lapséd strength again shall flower."—

As gentle soul which doth not seek excuse
But makes its very will of other's care—
As soon as outward signs that care educe—

E'en so the beauteous Lady moved (by her
I had been graspéd now) and—"Come"—she said
To Statius—"Come with him"—with queenly air.

Had I more space, O reader, where to spread
My writing, I would sing, at least in part,
The draft of which I ne'er felt surfeited;
But full the pages are where I did chart
The boundaries of this, my second strain,
And further let me not the reins of Art.
From that most hallowed water, born again
I rose (as haps to plants in the springtime
Alive anew with newly blossomed mane)
Pure and disposed unto the stars to climb.

Line 1—'The strangers have come'—from Psalm LXXVII which is a plaint about the destruction of Jerusalem. Appropriate to the matter treated in the preceding Canto. Sung by the 'three' (Theological) and the 'four' (Cardinal) Virtues.

7—Forbore from singing.

10—Applying Christ's words to the imminent resurrection of the Church.

15—Matelda and Statius, who remained after Virgil disappeared.

34—The Chariot representing the Church (Purg. XXXII, 130, etc.)

36—It was popular belief that by eating a meal (a 'soup') over a murdered man's grave, the murderer would become safe from a family 'vendetta'. No human means would stop God's justice.

37—The Eagle (Empire) whose plumes, etc. (see preceding Canto) will soon have a worthy heir.

40—The stars are approaching, whose combination will mark the time—inevilably—for the coming of a (43) DVX—an Emperor— who shall slay the harlot and the giant (mentioned in the preceding Canto.)

46—Like the enigma of the Sphinx or the oracles of Themis.

48—My reponse may shut (clog, impede) thy reason as the kind of responses given by the Sphinx or Themis.

49—The nymphs called Naiades were interpreters of enigmas and oracles. Having they explained a certain oracle and thereby conferred some benefits on the Thebans, Themis, for some reason enraged, sent wild beasts to destroy the Thebans' flocks and crops.

CANTO XXXIII

57—By the Eagle and by the Giant the 'Tree of Life' had been torn.

61—Adam, waiting for Christ.

65—The 'Tree of Life' like the other trees in the Sixth Round (of Gluttony) which are its offshoots (Purg. XXIV, 116) is inverted; its branches spread widest at its highest point. The season is that its life comes from above, from God.

67—The waters of the Elsa (tributary to the Arno) have some calcareous quality. Meaning: 'if vain thoughts had not encrusted thy mind.'

68—And if thy delight in them had not discolored thy mind like Pyramus' blood changed into red the green of the mulberry tree, on which it was spilled.

70—The circumstances (the peculiar formation) of the tree (its drawing life from above) would have proved that the 'ban' on it (forbidden to Adam) was according to God's justice—man having no right to it.

76—Though thou canst not understand, carry my words, or a trace of them, in thy mind. As a reminder, like the palms of the Pilgrims.

85—To show thee that the philosophical school cannot follow me. (Beatrice is Divine Knowledge or Theology).

88—The human way of knowing and the celestial (divine) way, are as different as the motionless earth is different from the fastest heaven (the ninth).

97—Thy very forgetting proves that thy desire was indeed once intent elsewhere—than to my doctrine and way of life.

100—From now on my words will be clear.

104, 105—The sun held the meridian: it was midday. The slower motion was only apparent. The meridian changes with the horizon of the beholder.

109—Where the sunlight attenuated the shadow.

112—Compares Lethe and Eunoe to the two Mesopotamian rivers issuing from a common spring.

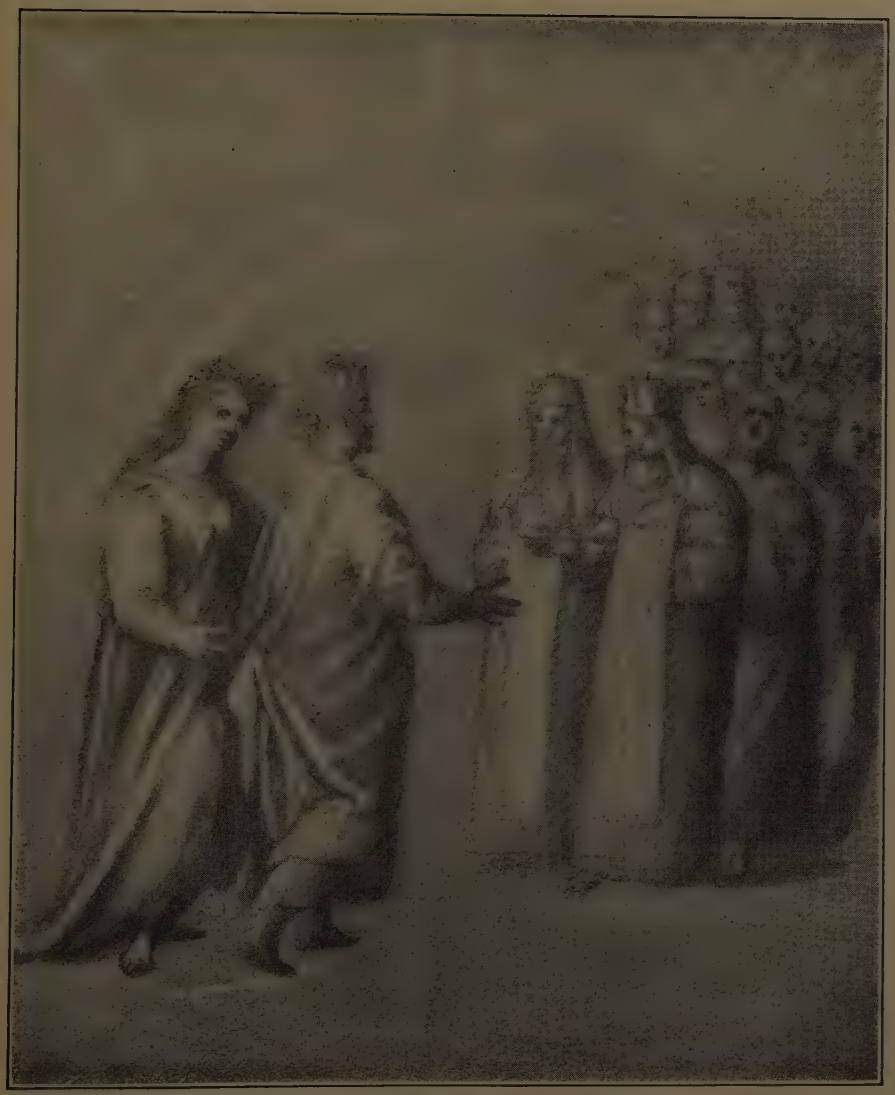
117—Spontaneously divided.

121—This is Matelda. She hastens to justify herself.

129—Make him drink of Eunoe.

133—Matelda.

138—The drink of Eunoe's water.



CANTO III

DANTE'S PARADISO

A Lineal and Rhymed Translation

by

REV. ALBERT R. BANDINI

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PREFACE

OF THE three Canticles of the Divine Comedy, the "Paradiso" is probably the least enjoyable by the casual reader, but it is surely the most admired by the "cognoscenti." The problem of the "locale" was first to be solved and Dante was here bound by the Ptolemaic-scholastic cosmology: how to utilize that conception of the heavens maintaining at the same time the pure spirituality of the Christian Paradise required a sort of ingenuity that may be truly called genius. Yet it might be said that the architecture of a poem, no matter how interesting and genial, has little to do with the value of the poetry itself, and, in a poem, poetry is surely the first requirement. The sincerity, the learning, the cleverness of an author in arranging his locale and his personages are no guarantee of his poetry.

But the "Paradiso" is poetry, always excellent, often sublime. The stateliness of the lines (of which, of course, a translation can give but a feeble echo), the surprisingly apt similes, the pithy sentences, the exactness of the language in description and even in definition create in the trained reader that peculiar feeling which comes from true poetry.

To appreciate the "Paradiso" fully, one must realize the important fact that it was conceived first in the mind of the poet: this third world is the pattern of the first two. Indeed it has been suggested that the "Paradiso" should be read first by a student of Dante.

I am very glad that with the publishing of this volume I am keeping well within the time limit hopefully expressed in the Preface to the "Inferno" though I quite understand that the establishing of a record-time has little to do with the worth of a translation.

The illustrations in this volume are reproduced from the works of John Stradano of Bruges, a disciple of Vasari.

ALBERT R. BANDINI

Cotati, California, 1931

CANTO I

ARGUMENT

After invoking new power from Heaven, the Poet relates of his ascent—with Beatrice—from the Terrestrial Paradise through the Sphere of Fire to the Heaven of the Moon—and of some explanations given by Beatrice on theological questions.

The glory of Him who moves the Whole doth pour
Throughout the universe, while it resplends
Less in one part and, in another, more.
The heav'n wherein more of his light He sends
Visiting, things I saw which to recount
Knows not, nor can whoe'er therefrom descends.
For, once approached of its desire the fount,
Our intellect doth reach such deep domain
That memory's stride cannot be tantamount.
Yet, of whatever in that holy reign
I could into my mind as treasure lay
I shall make matter now for this my strain.
O good Apollo, to my last essay
Make me such ample vessel of thy power
As thou requir'st to give the yearnéd bay.

16 One of Parnassus' peaks far as this hour
Sufficient was; to be by both conduced
I need, lest facing this last field I cower.

19 Let come thy spirit in my breast diffused
As at the time when Marsyas thy foe
Out of the scabbard of his limbs thou drew'st.

22 O Heavenly Power if help thou grantest, so
That such a shadow of the reign divine
Graved in my head, to others I may show

25 Thou shalt see me to that loved tree of thine
Coming to pluck its leaves as wreath to wear:
Thou and the subject shall make me condign.

28 Plucking of them, O Father, is so rare
To crown a poet or an Emperor
—Since men are moved by guilty and shameful care—

31 That the Peneian bough should bring yet more
Joy on the joyous Delphic Deity
When by somebody its boon is yearnéd for.

34 After small sparks may come flames soaring high:
Haply after me a prayer that ascends
With better voice, from Cyrrha will gain reply.

37 Comes to the mortals out of varied ends
The lamp that lights the world, but at the point
Which joins four circles with three crosses, thence

40 With better course and better stars conjoined
It issues and its temper and its mark
Deeper into the mundane wax is coined.

43 That pass had there bestirred morn's early spark
And had brought evening here; all clarified
Was there that hemisphere; the rest was dark,

CANTO I

When Beatrice I saw on her left side
Turnéd and fixing the sun's very gleam:
Thus never eagle's eye its glare defied.

And as one often sees a second beam
Strike forth out of the first and upward rise
(Thus homeward always turns a pilgrim's dream)

So with her action—gathered through my eyes
Into my fantasy—my own agreed,
And at the sun I looked, past mortal guise.

Much licit there that here does not concede
Our human virtue, due to that high place
Made as possession of the human seed.

Not long, yet not too short a time its rays
I stood, to fail to see it sparkling bright
Like seething iron out of furnace blaze.

At once I thought daylight upon daylight
Was added, as if He who can all things
Had caused another sun the skies ignite.

Beatrice all upon the timeless rings
Held fixed her eyes, while no less fixedly
On her alone my steady vision clings.

And inwardly that look so changes me
As Glaucus when the salty grass he tries
And joins the other gods beneath the sea.

No human word explains transhumanize;
To whom shall grace experience allow
Of it, such an example may suffice.

If what of me was lastly fashioned, now
Alone was left—Love, of the Heavens guide,
Whose splendor lifted me—that knowest Thou.

Soon as the wheel moved by th'eternal tide
Of longing after Thee forced me attend
With the chord Thou dost temper and divide,
Such space of heav'n, methought, I saw resplend
With the sun's flame, that rain or stream's o'erflow
Ne'er made a lake so far inshore extend.
The novelty of the sound and the vast glow
Aroused within my heart an eagerness
—Ne'er felt before so keen—their cause to know.
Whence she who, as I did, saw me no less,
Ready my troubled spirit to allay
Opened her lips, forestalling my address.
"Thyself thou cloudest"—she began to say—
"With truthless fancy, so thou fail'st to view
What thou couldst see, hadst shaken that away.
Counter to thy belief, thy body drew
Away from earth—ne'er sped from heav'n a jet
Of light as fast as thou return'st thereto."
Undued of the first doubt which had beset
My mind by the brief words she smiled so bright,
A novel doubt caught me within its net.
Therefore I said: "At peace and soothéd quite
From a great wonder, wonder I again
How 'tis that I trascend these bodies light."
Compassion drew from her a sigh of pain:
Then upon me she gazed, the look of her
Such as a mother's on her son insane.
And she began to say: "All things whate'er
Have order among them, and thus the Whole
Is, by that form, alike to its Seigneur.

The noble creatures see upon this scroll
The Eternal Power's print; in It must find
The already mentioned form its final goal.
And in that very order are inclined
The natures of all things, to their own source
Less near, or more, according to their kind.
Hence moves each to its port, by various course
Through the great sea of Being; and all things,
To bear them on, have their own inner force.
The substances of fire this moonward brings;
Motion in mortal hearts by this is wound,
Through this, the earth cloys on itself and clings.
Not only creatures in which is not found
Intelligence this speeding arrow hits
But those of intellect and love compound.
The Wisdom that each thing with others fits
Keeps ever still that heaven—with its light—
Which frames the one which speediest circles knits.
And thither now, as to appointed site
Brings both of us the virtue of that bow
Which but to happy goal sends arrow in flight.
Yet it is true, as form may overthrow
At times the intention in the artist's mind
Because the matter to respond is slow—
Thus with the given course is not aligned
At times the creature, which has power to bend
(E'en when so thrust) toward portion not assigned,
And (haply as one might see the fire descend
From cloud) when'er false pleasure doth prevail
We see the first impulse take earthward trend.

136 No wonder then should thy ascent entail—
If I judge right—just as a rivulet
That from high hills rolls down into the vale.
139 This, in thy state, much wonder would beget,
If hindrance-free thou hadst sat down to rest,
As if live fire on earth could quiet set."
142 Then towards the heavens high her eyes she stressed.

Line 4—The Empyrean—this is the motionless heaven, the true abode of God, and of all the Angels and Saints, images of whom are reflected in the lower heavens and thus visible in proper progression to the Poet in his ascent. Dante's cosmology is, briefly, as follows: the Earth as center of the Universe; around it the Sphere of Air, then the Sphere of Fire, then nine movable Heavens, each one naturally vaster and faster-moving; finally, outside of Time and Space, the Empyrean—I. Heaven, of the Moon with the Angels as presiding Spirits; II. of Mercury, with the Archangels; III. of Venus, with the Principalities; IV. of the Sun, with the Powers; V. of Mars, with the Virtues; VI. of Jupiter, with the Dominations; VII. of Saturn, with the Thrones; VIII. of the Fixed Stars with the Cherubim; IX. the Chrystalline Heaven or 'Primum Mobile' (First Moving) with the Seraphim; X. the Empyrean.

13—The God of poetry—used in a symbolical sense.

15—The crown on a poet's head.

16—Helicon, sacred to the Muses; Cyrrah, to Apollo.

31, etc.—The quest for the wreath of bay or laurel (Peneian, because Daphne, daughter of Peneus was changed into that tree) should give joy to Apollo (honored at Delphos, town at the foot of Mt. Parnassus).

36—See Line 16.

37, etc.—The lamp that lights the world (the Sun) comes forth with a better omen when (in the Spring Equinox) at the point where the circles of Zodiac, Equator and equinoctial colure form each a cross with the circle of the Horizon. The Sun is then in Aries.

43—"There"—in the Terrestrial Paradise.

58—This increase of light is experienced by the Poet as he passes through the Sphere of Fire.

68—The fisherman Glaucus by tasting certain a sea-herb became a marine god—some such change came upon the Poet, though (70) no word could explain his being "transhumanized."

73—Whether only my rational soul (created last) was raised to Heaven, God knows.

76, etc.—When the wheel of the "Firmament" (of all the nine heavens) made me attentive to itself with the "chord" (the harmony) by Thee (O God) aroused (the harmony of the spheres).

92—A jet of light—a lightning, from the sphere of Fire.

93—Thou return'st—as Heaven is the proper place of the human soul.

106, etc.—The rational creatures see in the Universe the seal of God in whom the cosmic order (the mentioned form) has its goal.

115, etc.—"This" is the instinctive force of line 114.

121—The Empyrean is motionless and surrounds the Primum Mobile, fastest of the nine moving heavens.

125—The bow of the instinctive force.

134—The original Godward impulse is deflected to earth.

CANTO II

ARGUMENT

Dante and Beatrice enter the Heaven of the Moon. Realistic and mystical explanation of the moonspots.

O you that in small bark so far have clung,
Through wish of listening, unto the way
Cleft by my ship that singing sails along,
Back to your shores you must your course now lay;
Should any of you strike for the deep, if he
Misses my lead he might go far astray.
Ere I set forth, none had traversed this sea.
Urged by Minerva and by Apollo led
I have nine Muses point the Bears to me.
But you, the few who to the Angels' bread
Have raised your neck betimes: bread whence a man
Draws life on earth but ne'er is fully fed—
You may well steer your boat and try to span
The salty vastness; to my wake hold fast,
Of the recluding waters in the van.

That glorious crew that unto Colchos passed
Were not so wonder-struck—as you will—when
On Jason and his plough their eyes were cast.
The concreate, perpetual thirst that men
Feel for the realm of God, raised both of us
As fast as turns the heaven in your ken.
Upwards Beatrice, and unto her I gazed;
And in such time perhaps as on the string
May pose a dart ere from the notch dislaced,
I found myself arrived where wondrous thing
Caused me to swerve my sight thereto: and she
For whom my cares could have no covering,
Shining with beauty as well as joy, to me
Thus spoke: "To the first star we have been brought;
Turn unto God thy reason gratefully."
We were embosomed in a cloud, methought,
Solid, translucent, dense and glistening bright
As diamond wherein sunbeams are caught.
Th'eternal pearl received within its sphere
Our forms, as waters which their wholeness keep
Although transfixéd by the sunlight's spear.
If I was flesh (but for our mind too deep
Is how one mass another held, for so
Must be, should body in other body creep)
With sharper flame in us the wish should glow
That essence to behold in which the twain
Natures of God and man united show—
Knowledge now held by faith we there shall gain
Not demonstrated but self-evident
Like the first truths that come in reason's train.

CANTO II

"My Lady"—answered I—"so reverent
As I can feel, I give my thanks to Him
Who from the mortal world caused my ascent.
But pray tell me what are the markings dim
Upon this body? On earth, the sight of those
Moves folks to fancy Cain's fable grim."
She smiled a while and then: "If error grows"—
She said—"in what asserts the mortal mind
Where naught the key of senses may disclose,
No longer should the darts of wonder find
Their aim in thee, since where sense-motion leads
Thou see'st the wings of reason lag behind.
But tell how thine own thought this question reads."
And I: "What shows up here to us diverse
From bodies rare or dense, methink, proceeds."
And she: "Thou shalt for sure see quite immerse
In falsehood thy belief, if thou list well
To counter argument I shall rehearse.
The eight of spheres gives you the spectacle
Of many lights—and some in sheen and size,
As one may clearly note, the rest excel.
Should this from matter rare or dense arise
One only virtue would be found in all
In greater, lesser, or in equal guise.
Virtues divers—as fruits need roots—do call
For formal principles; save only one,
These, by thy reasoning, away would fall.
Again, if it were rareness that brings on
The dark thou ask'st about, then for some space
Its very stuff would wholly lack upon

And through this planet; or—as find their place
Within a body, fat and lean—so this
Would varied pages in its tome encase.

Were the first true, 'twould show whene'er you miss
The Sun eclipsed, because the light would shew
Across it, as through other rarities.

This is not so, and hence we now must view
The second point; if this I can unweave
Then thy contention shall be proved untrue.

If 'tis assured this rareness does not cleave
The whole, there needs must be a limit whence
Its contrary no further pass doth leave,

And so the foreign beam there backward bends
As image answered from a glass is seen
Whose back by hidden lead is rendered dense.

Now thou shalt say that here is shown less keen
—More than in other parts—a ray of light
Being reflected from much further in.

From such contention sets thee free the right
Experience—shouldst thou put it to test—
Which is of your arts' stream the fountain site.

Three mirrors take, and setting two recessed
Equally far, one farther out from thee,
On this—between the two—thine eyes let rest.

Now, facing them, do that a lamp there be
Lit at thy shoulders, so that back again
To thee the mirrored flame come from all three.

And though the farthest flame shall not obtain
An equal quantum, yet an equal glow
Thou shall see there as in th'other twain.

CANTO II

As is despoiled the substance of the snow
Losing its former cold and former hue
When the sunbeams on it their warmth bestow,
Thy intellect so left I shall imbue
With such a light that will so vivid shine,
Its aspect shall be dazzling to thy view.
Within the heaven of the peace divine
A body turns in whose power is reposed
The 'being' of all things in its confine.
The heaven next—which holds the starry host—
That 'being' parts through various essences
From it distinct and yet in it enclosed.
The other rings, such distinct properties
Within their bounds, through further modes refract
According to their seeds and purposes.
These organs of the world are so compact—
As thou must now perceive—from grade to grade
That from above they take, below they act.
Look well to me; see how my way is made
Unto the truth thou seek'st—through this discourse—
That thou, alone, be able then to wade.
The holy circles' motion and their force—
As hammer's skill comes from the blacksmith's might—
Must in the blesséd motors find its source.
The heaven by so many lamps made bright
From the deep mind whence comes its circling thrust
The image takes and with that stamp is dight.
And as the living soul within your dust
Through various limbs to varied faculty
Fashioned, doth all of its effects adjust,

Thus that Intelligence doth multiply
Its goodness through the stars and doth effund,
Turning itself upon its unity.
And varied virtue knits with varied bond
The precious body it quickens: welded so
That life in you to it would correspond.
And since it doth from joyful nature flow
The virtue mixéd with the mass resplends
As sparkling eyes one's happiness will show.
From it derives the seeming difference
Twixt light and light, and not from dense or fine;
This is the formal principle which blends,
Conforming to its goodness, dark or shine."

Line 9—The North is indicated by the constellations of the Bears.

10—Wisdom.

16—The Argonauts—Jason their leader, plowed the land and sowed serpents' teeth from which sprang full-armed warriors. Dante's reader will be even more wonder-struck.

21—The Heaven of the Stars, seen by men to turn fully around in 24 hours.

34—The Heaven of the Moon is called a pearl having been described (31-33) as a luminous gem.

37, etc.—If I was in my body—and penetrating another body—we ought to desire even more to see Christ.

45—Axiomatic truths.

49—Cain's face in the Moon.

52, etc.—No wonder that reason errs when the senses tell nothing, since, even when the senses lead to some deduction, reason fails to hit the mark.

64—That of the Stars.

67, etc.—If the Stars vary only as to the density of their matter, each would possess the same virtue (power of influencing men) though in a different degree; but since the Stars (70) have diverse virtues their diversity must come from a difference of "formal principle" (essential constitution).

73, etc.—Either in some place the planet has a void throughout, or it is made of strata differing in density.

79, etc.—If there was a hole throughout it would show in an eclipse.

85, etc.—Given that the "rareness" does not go right through there must be a point where the "density" (its contrary) keeps that "rareness" from going further in.

91, etc.—The objection might be that the sunlight, reflected somewhere in the body of the planet from a deeper cavity, shows accordingly less bright.

103, etc.—The light reflected from the farthest mirror will have a smaller "quantum" (size) but will be of equal intensity.

112, etc.—(See also Par. I., Note to line 4) Within the Empyrean turns the Primum Mobile (Ninth Heaven) whose "power" contains the vital force (the being) of the Whole. This vital force is distributed by the Eighth Heaven (of the Stars) into the various natures (essences) it contains. The lower heavens divide the vital force into further modes. Thus work the "organs of the world", h. e. the heavens.

129—In the Angelic Intelligences which preside to each Heaven.

130—The heaven of the Stars is stamped with the power of the deep mind (God or the presiding Angel) which turns it.

133, etc.—As the soul works through the various limbs of the body, so the Intelligence (the "deep mind" of line 131) multiplies and effunds itself through the Stars.

139—The diversified virtue or power combines differently with whatever "precious body" (star or planet) it penetrates and moves—just as the power of life through man's limbs.

142—This virtue mixed with the material mass of star or planet resplends because it derives from the joyful nature (of God).

145—From that diversified virtue comes the difference in brightness seen in the celestial bodies.

CANTO III

ARGUMENT

Spirits appear to Dante, faintly outlined. One of them Piccarda Donati, explains why they are in the first Heaven—how their happiness is withal perfect—and also recounts the tragedy of her life.

The sun which first had warmed with love my breast
Thus had revealed of truth a beauteous trait,
Of proof and of disproof making the test;
And I, who wished to show myself satiate
With her account, and sure—to speak outright
As it was proper, raised my head up straight.
But then appeared a vision; and my sight
It made so fast unto itself adhere
That my confession was forgotten quite.
And as through glasses of transparence clear
Or as through waters of terse, tranquil flow—
Not deep to make their bottom disappear—
Our faces with their traits reflected show
So feeble that from white forehead the gleam
Of pearl would reach our pupils no less slow,

Thus I descried some eager faces beam
Therein, and fell to error contrary
Than that which kindled love twixt man and stream.
Soon as their presence was thus known to me,
Thinking of them as faces mirroréd,
Backward I turned, their persons true to see.
But naught I saw — again I looked ahead
Straight in the visage of my escort sweet
Whose holy eyes a smile sweet-flashing shed.
"Indeed it should with no such wonder meet—"
She said—" my smile upon thy childish thought,
Which shuffles yet twixt truth and false conceit,
And vainly turning sets itself at naught:
Thy eyes herein true substances perceive
Held here by vows not to completion brought.
Speak then to them and listen and believe
That the true light which sets their heart at rest
To none—to stray from it—ever gives leave."
The one with lips most eager I addressed
Among the shades, and in beginning so
I felt as man by his own zeal distressed.
"O well created spirit in the glow
Of timeless life full of such ravishment
That only those who taste it ever know,
'Twill give me joy if kindly shouldst content
My wish about thy name and your estate."
With laughing eyes the shade showed its consent.
"To any just desire bars not the gate
Our love; to that which wills its court to be
All equal to itself, it is cognate.

CANTO III

As virgin nun the earth, of old, knew me,
And if thy memory's search is not remiss
More beauty shall not hide my traits from thee,

But thou shalt know again Piccarda: in this
Circle amidst the other blessed host
Within the slowest sphere I have my bliss.

And our affections which the Holy Ghost
Only, and His pleasure, may to love arouse
Make us rejoice to be so disposed.

This rank that seems so lowly, He allows
To us for the neglect which did impair,
Or other partial lack which marred our vows."

"Upon your semblances so wondrous fair
Something divine resplends—" was my reply—
"Estranging you from knowledge gained elsewhere.

Hence not so prompt was now my memory,
But helped am I by what thy tongue just spake
And in remembering more at home am I.

But tell, while of such joy you here partake
Do you a higher station yet desire
For greater light's or greater friendship's sake?"

She smiled with all of that celestial choir
And happy so she seemed when she replied
As if she glowed of love in the first fire.

"Brother, our yearnings all are satisfied
Through love's own virtue which our will confines
To what we have, and naught we thirst beside.

Were we desirous of superior shrines
Then would our will become not in accord
With that of Him who here our kind assigns.

For that these circles can no place afford,
If here all life must needs with love pulsate
And if its nature is, in truth, explored.

Nay, it is formal to this blest estate
To keep within the will of God alone:
In their oneness with it our wills are sate.

And thus our gradual stations 'neath the throne
Of this vast realm, to all this realm must please—
And to the King whose will informs our own.

His will is the foundation of our peace:
It is that sea toward which at last must bear
All It creates, and natural increase."

Then it was clear to me that everywhere
Is Paradise in heaven, e'en though the grace
Of the High Good pours not in equal share.

But as it haps that while one food allays
Our craving, for another we may yearn,
And so for this, thanking for that, one prays—

Like such, with act and word I begged to learn
From her what web it was where to the head
The shuttle had not taken its full turn.

"A perfect life and high deserts"—she said—
"Above enshrine a Dame at whose dictate
Are your world's children veiled and habited,

And they, till death, asleep or wakeful, wait
Beside the groom who doth no vows reject
Where by his pleasure love is animate.

Fleeing the world, her path I did elect,
Still young, and with her shielding robe indued
I vowed to keep the manner of her sect.

Men used to evil deeds rather than good
Dragged me without the walls of my delight;
After, God knows what life for me ensued.
This other splendor which upon my right
Reveals to thee its semblance and whose ray
With all the shining of this sphere is bright,
Intends of her what of myself I say;
A sister she, and from her forehead, too,
The shade of sacred weeds was ta'en away.
While forced to turn into the world anew—
Against her will and all right use demands—
Never the veil from o'er her heart she drew.
Great Constance holds within this light her stance
Who from Suabia's second storm did bring
The third one forth, and so the last puissance."
Thus spoke the light to me, then 'gan to sing:
AVE MARIA and singing disappeared
Such as through darkling waves a heavy thing.
My sight which to her trail so far adhered
As it has power, when it lost her trace
Back to the goal of highest desire it veered,
All turning to Beatrice, but my face
Was lit from her with such a dazzling glow
That for a while it overwhelmed my gaze;
And this made me to new demands more slow.

Line 18—Narcissus mistook for another person his own image reflected in the stream (and fell in love with the image); I mistook for mere images what was really persons—or substances (the souls who while properly residing in the Empyrean, yet appear in the various heavens by which they had been supposedly influenced).

30, etc.—In the Heaven of the Moon appear the souls of those who failed to live up to their vows. But remember that the "true light" of God in the Empyrean allows them not to be away from itself—as later it will be explained.

44—Our love is of the same kind (cognate) as that Love (God) who wishes all the court (of the blessed) to be equally generous (as God is).

49, etc.—Piccarda Donati had entered the Convent. Her vicious brother, Corso, took her away by force obliging her to marry a friend of his.

54—To be placed even in the slowest heaven (of the Moon).

69—As maid enkindled by her first love.

76—For "that"—h. e. for lack of accord with God's will.

79—Formal: the very substance.

74—"Informs": h. e. grants the substantial form, the "being".

87—All created directly by God and the increase thereof through natural causes.

95—Asks for her story, left uncompleted as if, in weaving, one should stop the shuttle before reaching the edge.

97, etc.—Saint Claire of Assisi, founder of the Franciscan Nuns.

118—This Constance, daughter of Ruggieri, King of Sicily, was taken from a monastery and forced to marry Emperor Henry VI. (son of Frederick I.—the first "storm") by whom she had a son, Frederick II. third and last "storm" of the House of Suabia.

CANTO IV

ARGUMENT

Beatrice clarifies the unspoken doubts of Dante's: why the souls appear as dwelling in the various stars and why a suffered violence may reduce one's merits. She also explains an apparent contradiction between her own words and Piccarda's.

Between two foods at equal distance placed
And tempting equally, before he brought
One to his teeth, free man would starve and waste;
E'en so would stand a lamb if haply caught
Twixt two fierce wolves, fearing each side the same;
And so a dog between two does distraught.
Therefore my silence there I do not blame
(As equal doubts to me were equal goad)
Since necessary it was—nor faultless claim.
Silent I was and yet my yearning showed
Upon my face, and—better than would tell
Plain spoken words—therein my query glowed.
Beatrice did as once did Daniel
When the foul anger which had made the King
So cruel and unjust, he did dispel.

She said: "Well I perceive two wishes wring
Thy mind; and thy concern, in self-made chains,
For its external flight can find no wing.

Thou dost object: if goodwill there remains
Steadfast, why should external violence
Cut down of my deserts the proper gains?

Also this doubt thy intellect offends:
Souls seem to answer of their star the call,
Returning there—and this is Plato's sense.

These are the questions that against the wall
Thrust of my mind and I shall now select
To treat as first the one with more of gall.

The Seraphim with godliest intellect,
Moses or Samuel or either John,
As thou may'st choose, I say—nor Mary except—

Dwell in no other heaven that the one
Where those thou hast met here have their sojourn,
Nor more nor less their being's years shall run.

All make of the first gyre their beauteous urn
Where in degree divers their life is sweet
As they feel more or less the breath eterne.

Though here they show, yet justice did not mete
This sphere to them; as mark it is assigned
Of their celestial yet least lofty seat.

Such language only can affect your mind
Because from sense alone it apprehends
What for your intellect is then refined.

It is for this that Scripture condescends
To your weak faculty, and thus its word
God's hands and feet in other sense intends.

Thus Holy Church doth human traits accord
To Gabriel and Michael and so
To him whose touch Tobias' health restored.

What here about the souls thou comest to know
Is quite unlike Timaeus' argument
Since in his words a real belief would show.

That souls return to their own star is meant
By him, believing they were cut from there
When they by nature as a form were lent.

And haply other than his words aver
His meaning may be found; 'tis not to spurn,
Perhaps, the intention that his writings bear.

If he but means that to these wheels return
Honor for influencing souls or blame,
His bow aimed truly, haply one might discern.

Upon this principle's ill-reasoned claim
Almost the world entire was led astray,
When Jove, Mars, Mercury gained their false name.

The other doubt which causes thee dismay
Less poison has; if there some malice teems
It cannot lead thy steps from me away.

If in the mortal eyes our justice seems
Unjust, this is indeed faith's argument:
It cannot lead where heresy blasphemes.

But since your understanding may consent
Your gathering this truth, in full import,
And thou so wishest, thou shalt be content.

If violence comes when who suffers tort
Nothing concedes to one who brings duress
These souls' excuses then would be but short.

Naught can the will, if truly it wills, suppress:
'Tis to the fire's own nature similar
Forced e'en a thousand times beneath some stress.
For, yielding much or little, in so far
It follows force: they could regain their band,
But so did not the souls within this star.
Had they such will that unimpaired could stand
As that which Lawrence on the fire maintained
And Mutius made so ruthless to his hand,
Unto that road it would have them constrained
Whence they had come, soon as in freedom set;
But such a strength of will is seldom gained.
And by these words that argument is met
(If thou hast gathered them as thou shouldst do)
Which would have troubled thee quite often yet.
But now another pass across thy view
Stands threatening, and such that, left alone,
Thou wouldst be weary of it, ere getting through.
This truth I have impressed—thy mind upon—
That blessed spirits cannot lie, since e'er
They stand of truth supreme close to the throne.
And thou hast heard Piccarda this declare
That Constance always loved the veil she lost:
A contradiction here thou couldst infer.
Brother, to flee some danger which had crossed
One's path, it happened oft that things were done
Against one's will, though were the deeds unjust.
Thus at his father's prayers Alcmeon
His mother slew, and while he did obey
As a good son, he was a ruthless son.

Now in thy mind thou must this matter weigh:
When outer force and inner will coalesce
Then no excuses can the offense allay.
Absolute will can never acquiesce
To harm, save in so far as there is dread—
Should it refuse—to fall in worse distress.
What then Piccarda's words elicited
Only concerns will absolute; I meant
The other, hence by both the truth is said."
Thus flowed the hallowed current whose descent
Is whence all truths have fountain crystalline;
Thus both desires of mine were made content.
"O love of the First Lover, O Divine—"
I said—"whose speech has in my heart o'erflown
And quickens more and more this life of mine,
My love goes not so deep that it, alone,
May give to you fit graces for each grace;
Let Him who sees and can, add of his own.
Well I perceive that no repletion stays
Our mind, if by that truth 'tis not appeased
Beyond whose realm for truth there is no space.
It rests in it—as in its lair a beast—
On reaching it; and it can reach that end
Or else our yearnings never would be eased.
Yet, 'tis through these that novel shoots extend
From truth's own roots; by nature thus impelled
Men summitward from hill to hill ascend.
I dare, prompted by this, by this upheld
Humbly to ask, Mylady, by thy word
The dark round other truth may be dispelled.

I wish to know if you to men accord
Paying for broken vows with other dower,
That on your scales the balance be restored."
Beatrice looked at me, and such a shower
Of sparks of love came from her eyes divine,
That, overwhelmed, in flight turned all my power,
And almost lost I was and closèd mine.

Line 9—As his two doubts were of equal intensity, his silence was unavoidable. (Action presupposes a preponderant impulse in one direction).

13—Daniel interpreted the unspoken dreams of Nebuchadnezzar. Other soothsayers, unable to do that, had been put to death.

25—Plato's theory was that the souls returned to the stars whence they had come.

33—Their state of happiness shall not last any shorter time.

35—The eternal emanations of God.

48—Raphael.

50—What Plato states in his dialogue, the "Timaeus" has nothing to do with the facts as I have explained, since he seems to convey a "real belief" that souls actually make their abode in the stars.

58, etc.—If he only means that the honor or the blame for soul-influence goes back to the stars, there may be truth in it.

61, etc.—The claim based on the principle (exaggerated) of the stars' influence led the people to deify the planets under various names.

66—Cannot lead away from Divine Knowledge.

68—Through faith one admits Divine Justice even if in the eyes of men certain manifestations of it are not clear. There is no heresy in acknowledging such opposition.

73—These souls have no excuse if we think of people who yield nothing to violence. (They yielded).

77—Strong will is like fire, flaring upwards no matter how often forced down.

CANTO IV

79—The will, yielding, gives in to force—the souls in this star could have joined again their sisters (their band) but did not.

83—Saint Lawrence on his griddle, or Mutius Scaevola holding his hand upon the fire.

103—Alcmaeon, see Note to Purg. XII.-49.

109, etc.—Piccarda has said that Constance (Par. III., 117) "never drew the veil from her heart" but that referred to "will absolute" which remains, as it were, suspended since it gives in to practical circumstances; Beatrice speaks of will that remains unimpaired (as that of Lawrence or Mutius) in any situation.

125—Divine truth.

130—Our yearnings cause new doubts to grow from the known roots of truth.

136—"You", meaning in general the Blessed Spirits, the Court of Heaven.

141—My visive power.

CANTO V

ARGUMENT

Beatrice explains the theory of vows and of their possible permutation. Ascent into the Second Heaven (of Mercury) where are seen the Spirits of those who were active for righteousness. Many such Spirits greet the Poet.

"If in the warmth of love I shine so bright
Beyond all manners seen on earth below
So that I overcome thy strength of sight,
Wonder not thou; the reason of that glow
Is perfect sight, which as it apprehends
Thus reaches toward the good it came to know.
I well perceive how in thy mind resplends,
Already, Eternal light, which—if but seen—
Enkindles fire of love that never ends.
If other thing succeeds your love to wean
Naught else it is but vestige of that ray
Which, though ill-known, is glimmering therein.
Thou crav'st to know if other service may
For broken vows give such an offering
To keep the soul out of contention's way."

This strain Beatrice had begun to sing
And then as one who shuns to disconnect
One's speech, proceeded with her reasoning.
"As gift of God Creator most elect
Out of his bounty, and to his goodness best
Conformed—and by Himself most highly reck't—
The Freedom of the Will must be confessed
Of which the creatures of intelligence,
All—and they only—were and are possessed.
This clearly shows, if thou dost argue hence,
The lofty worth of vows, when such in fact
That God agrees to what man's will intends:
Because to seal twixt God and man the pact,
This treasure—and its worth I have made plain—
Becomes the victim, by its very act.
By what may then the place of it be ta'en?
If of thing offered think'st to make fair use,
Good work thou seek'st to make from evil gain.
The point is clear which seemed the most abstruse;
But Holy Church doth of that weight remit,
Whence 'gainst the truth I showed some doubt ensues.
Thou must yet longer at this table sit
Needing my aid so the too rigid food
Thou tak'st, be for digestion rendered fit.
Ope well thy mind to what will now be shewed
And hold that firm; since what one holds in mind
Makes science, not whate'er is understood.
Two things into the essence are combined
Of such a sacrifice; first, what supplies
Its matter; second, then, the covenant signed.

46 The latter nothing ever nullifies
Except completion—this I have exposed
In previous words which sounded quite precise.

49 Therefore it was enjoined to give a host
On the Jews' part, e'en though the gift might be
At times permuted, as thou surely know'st.

52 The first—it was as "matter" shown to thee—
Might well be such to make it no misdeed
The change with things of other quality.

55 Yet let no one of his own will proceed
To change his shoulders' load, unless before
The yellow key and white the lock have freed

58 And let such change as witless all abhor
'Less the thing dropped, in that which takes its place
Is held—like four in six—by such a score.

61 However, when so heavy an object weighs
That every scale upon its side must swing,
For that no other satisfaction pays.

64 Think not, ye mortals, vows a trifling thing:
Be true to them, yet not with warpéd eye
As Jephtha showed in his first offering.

67 Better for him to say: 'A wrong did I'
Than fulfil and do worse: thou shalt declare
The great Chief of the Greeks mad equally,

70 Whence Iphigenia mourned her visage fair;
And all, both fools and wise, to tears she drave
Who ever heard of that rite sinister.

73 Ye Christians, in your movements be more grave;
Be not like plume that with all breezes flies:
Think not that in all waters you may lave.

The Old and the New Pact give you advice,
The Shepherd of the Church is guiding you:
For your salvation this must needs suffice.
And if your ill desires should raise their hue,
Be men, not silly sheep soon led astray—
Let not of you laugh, in your midst, the Jew.
Be ye not like a lamb who runs away
From mother's milk and seems himself to fight
All by himself in shy lascivious play."
Thus spoke Beatrice, just as here I write,
Then turned, as if by rush of longing swept
To that part of the world which shows most bright.
Her silence and her changèd aspect kept
My tongue in check and so my eager brain
Which to new questions had already lept.
And as, before the cord is still again,
An arrow has already struck its aim,
Thus hastened we into the second reign.
Such joyfulness I saw upon my Dame
When by the splendor of that heav'n enwrapt
That more resplendent e'en the star became.
If in that star such joyous changing happed
What became I, my nature making me
Unto all sorts of change a subject apt?
As in a tranquil pond and clear we see
The fish—if from without falls in a mite
Which looks like food—thereto draw eagerly:
Thus splendors numberless came to my sight,
Who moved toward us and each was heard to say:
"Behold who will increase our love's delight."

And as still closer drew the mighty array
Out of each shade I saw bright effluence
That of their inner joy was clear display.
Think, reader, now, if what I here commence
Should not proceed, how for the tale untold
Thy craving, e'en to anguish, were intense.
And thou shalt see how from the blessèd fold
Eager I was to hear of their estate
Soon as their traits I plainly could behold.
"Thou born to bliss, to whom is gi'en such great
Favor to see the Thrones of glory eterne
While in the world thou still dost militate,
Out of the light which fills the heavens burn
Our flames; ask then whate'er to thee may please
If aught concerning us thou crav'st to learn."
One of the holy spirits uttered these
Words and Beatrice: "Freely speak thy 'hest
And trust in them as if in deities."
"Well I perceive how thou hast found thy nest
In thine own light and draw'st it in thy gaze
As in its glow thy joy is manifest,
But I know not thy name, nor why thy place,
O worthy soul, is set this sphere within
Which cloaks its splendor with extraneous rays."
These words I spoke while fixed in that serene
Light which to me had spoken; whence it shone
Much brighter than its former glow had been.
As through the very excess of light, the sun
Conceals itself whene'er the tempering tide
Of vapors dense is by the heat undone,

Thus greater joy appeared from me to hide
The holy shape within its glistening
And thus all self-concealed the shape replied
As in the strain which follows I shall sing.

Line 5—The sight granted to the Blessed (as to Beatrice); increased knowledge produces greater striving toward the Good (God) apprehended.

10, etc.—Whatever is good in creatures is a vestige of Divine goodness.

15—Contention between what is due and what is given.

27—If the subject-matter of the vow (formally, the vow is a yielding of free-will) is agreeable to God.

30—The free-will is sacrificed.

32—Once a thing has been offered to God, man cannot make a "fair" (legitimate) use of it in another way.

45—The pact (or vow) entered into between God and man.

46—Only by fulfillment is the pact satisfied.

57—Only the Church through the "power of the Keys" may permute the subject-matter of a vow.

58, etc.—The substituted matter should be of greater value.

61—No substitution is possible when the vow concerns a very weighty matter. (Like vows of religious life). Dante is here more rigorous than the Church in her practice.

66—Jephta (Judges XI, 30 etc.) had vowed to offer to God the first creature he would meet at his house, if returning victorious from war. His daughter came first toward him.

69—Agamennon who sacrificed Iphigenia.

72—Iphigenia's sacrifice.

87—Toward the Sun at its Zenith—that is, toward the Empyrean.

93—The Heaven of Mercury.

105—Beatrice.

125—Thou draw'st thy inner light into the eyes—and that inner glow shows thy joy.

129—The heaven of Mercury is somewhat overshone by the Sun, close to it.

CANTO VI

ARGUMENT

The Spirit of Emperor Justinian outlines the story of the Eagle (the Imperial Sign) first in the hands of the Romans, then of their successors, up to present (Dante's) times.

"When, after Constantine, the eagle strook
'Gainst heaven's course, which it had held of yore
Following him who fair Lavinia took,
The bird of God two hundred years and more
Its nest upon the hem of Europe laid
Close to the hills whence first 'twas seen to soar.
And of the sacred plumage 'neath the shade
Passed of the world from hand to hand the reign
Until to my own hand it was conveyed.
Caesar I was, Justinian I remain
Who by the will of the First Love I feel
Drew from the laws what was too much or vain.
And ere to such emprise I gave my zeal
One nature only in Christ I thought to be,
And in that faith I held to be my weal.

It was the blessèd Agapetus, he
Shepherd Supreme, who to the faith sincere
With his true reasoning directed me.

To him I did believe and now 'tis clear
To me what his words meant, as false and right
A contradiction must to thee appear.

As soon as with the Church I moved, with light
Of inspiration I, from God, was blest
And to the high emprise I gave me quite.

My Belisarius then I did invest
With power of arms: so helped by Heaven's hand
Was he, a sign to me that I should rest.

Now here my answer to thy first demand
Is aimed, but forces me its very gist
With something else my answer to expand,

That thou mayst see how foolishly enlist
In war against the holy sign, all those
Who claim it theirs, or who to it resist.

Through what display of virtue, see, it rose
To its high place; and it began the day
When death, to give it power, Pallas chose.

In Alba then it made its nest, to stay
Three hundred years and more, until was waged
Finally, for its sake, the triple fray.

Thou know'st its deeds, from the Sabines outraged
—With seven Kings—until Lucretia wept,
While to subdue the neighbors 'twas engaged.

Thou know'st how this the noble Romans kept
In hand and Brennus, Pyrrhus overcame:
Princes and burghers' hosts away they swept;

CANTO VI

Whereby Torquatus, Quintius (whose surname
From locks unkempt), the Fabii did gain
—The Decii, too—their gladly incenséd fame.

It crushed to earth the Arabs' pride and main
Who followed Hannibal across the untraced
Crags of the Alps whence, Po, springs thy first vein.

Scipio and Pompeus, youthful still, it raised
To their high triumphs; felt was by the hill
Above thy own birthplace its bitter taste.

Then near the time when it was Heaven's will
To bring the world unto its cloudless peace
Caesar took it, Rome's mandate to fulfill.

And then from Var to Rhine, its victories
Isere did view and Era and Seine did view
And all the vales which give the Rhone increase.

After, its deeds when from Ravenna it drew
And crossed the Rubicon, soared up so high
That tongue or pen could not its flight pursue.

On toward the Spanish soil 'twas seen to fly,
Then to Dyrrachium; and Pharsalia felt
Such blows that to the Nile arose the cry.

Antandros and the Simois, where it dwelt
At first, it saw again and Hector's tomb:
Ptolemy, to his woe, 'gainst it rebelled.

Then, lightning fast, to Juba it brought his doom;
Then quickly turned its course unto your West
Where it had heard Pompeus' trumpet boom.

Cassius and Brutus howl for its high geste
With a new bearer—in hell's very deep,
And Modena and Perugia were distressed.

Luckless Cleopatra has not ceased to weep
Since flying from it, by the viper stung
She gained—in manner foul—death's sudden sleep.

With him o'er the Red Sea its wings were flung,
With him so peaceful the whole world it made
That shut at last the gate of Janus swung.

But of this sign the deeds so far surveyed
Or those to come in time yet to mature—
Because all mortal rule by it is swayed—

Become in semblance little and obscure
If it is viewed in the third Caesar's hold
With vision clear and with affection pure.

For in the hand of him by me extolled
The Living Justice which inspires my tongue
Gave it the vengeance of its wrath of old.

Hark to this other wonder in my song:
With Titus sped the Sign to the reprise
For the revenge upon the ancient wrong.

And when the Lombard teeth caught in their vise
The Holy Church, Charlemagne to help arose
And 'neath its wings gained noble victories.

Thou canst now pass thy judgment upon those
Whom I accused above, and their ill deeds
Which are the fountain springs of all your woes.

Against the common Sign one faction leads
The Lilies; claims another: "It is mine"—
'Tis hard to judge which worse of the two breeds.

Ply, Ghibellines, under another sign
Your arts: on that unduly lay their grip
Who that and a just cause do not combine.

106 Let not young Charles who claims Guelph leadership
Strike down this Sign; let him those claws beware
Which harder lions have been known to strip.

109 Often enough the weeping children bear
Their fathers' guilt; and let him not expect
God to His arms the Lilies will prefer.

112 This little star is with the light bedeckt
Of worthy souls who acted so that fame
And future honor would on them reflect.

115 But if men's hearts have set hereto their aim
(That much astray) true love must seek, perforce,
The highest goal with a less lively flame.

118 But measuring the pay we here embourse
With our deserts, is part of our delight:
Either is shown no better and no worse.

121 Hence by living justice soothéd quite
Are all our feelings, which can never bend
To any wandering from the path of right.

124 In sweet accord do divers voices blend
On earth; thus 'midst these wheels of life eterne
From divers seats sweet harmonies ascend.

127 And in this present pearl thou couldst see burn
Romeo's shining light: who only met
—For great and noble deeds—the people's spurn.

130 But they from Provence who 'gainst him were set
Lacked chance to laugh: on them must ill befall
Who the good deeds of others make their fret.

133 Four daughters, and each crowned in royal hall
Had Raymund Berlinghieri, and for his good
Romeo, a humble stranger, did this all.

Then with the venom of false words imbued
He asked a reckoning from this just man:
All back he gave with much thereon accrued.
Poor and in his old age he suffered ban,
And if the world but knew what heart he had
The while he begged a living scran by scran,
It would much more unto his praises add."

Line 1—With Constantine the Eagle of the Empire moved toward the East, while with Aeneas (who married Lavinia in Italy) it had moved Westward.
5—Constantinople is not far from the hills about the site of Troy.
10—The spirit speaking is that of Emperor Justinian (crowned in 539 A. D.) who undertook the systematization of Roman Laws.
16—Pope Agapetus brought back Justinian to the true Catholic faith (of two natures in Jesus Christ).
20—Of two contrary statements, one must be perforce false, if one is true.
24—The work of codification.
25—Belisarius, famous commander of Imperial armies.
28—Dante had asked who the spirit was.
31, etc.—Both the Ghibellines (who make the Imperial Eagle a partisan sign) and Guelphs who oppose it, are indead at war with that holy sign.
36—Pallas was the son of King Evander, Italian ally of Aeneas: his death in the war of the Trojans against the opposing Italian forces marked the beginning of Aeneas' triumph (Aeneas is the forerunner of the Empire).
37, etc.—Aeneas' descendants ruled in Alba for three centuries and more, but the supremacy passed to Rome at the time when the three Roman Oratii defeated the three Alban Curiatii; the war being decided by that duel.
40—The deeds of the Eagle, from the "Rapt of the Sabines" to the downfall of Tarquinius Superbus, last of the Kings, occasioned by his having offended the maid Lucretia.
43—'This':—the Sign of the Eagle.
44—Brennus, invader from Gaul; Pyrrhus from Epirus.

CANTO VI

46, etc.—Famed personages of Roman history: Quintius "Cincinnatus" was the Consul called from the plough. Decii and Fabii: well known families whose glory is "gladly incensed" (praised) by Dante.
51—Po, the main river of North Italy.
53—The hill of Fiesole, overlooking Florence (birthplace of Dante) felt the bitter taste of the Roman Eagle at the time when Catilina's army of rebels was destroyed there.
56—Near the time of Christ, when Heaven gave its own peace to the earth.
58-60—Rivers of Gaul.
64, etc.—Caesar's war against the Pompeian party, first in Spain then in Thessaly. Defeated at Pharsalia, Pompey took refuge in Egypt (the Nile) and there was slain.
67—Rivers near Troy's site where Caesar landed. Ptolemy was King of Egypt.
70-73—Juba, King of Numidia. Back to Spain where Pompey's sons kept up the struggle.
74—Octavianus who defeated Cassius and Brutus. (See Inf. XXXIV).
75—Cities in North Italy.
79—With Octavianus.
81—The gate of Janus' Temple in Rome was kept shut in time of peace.
86—What the sign of the Eagle did when held by the third Caesar (Tiberius) obscures all past and future deeds of it.
88—Tiberius was the instrument of the Divine Vengeance for the Original sin, as a Roman Judge condemned Christ to death.
91, etc.—The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus' army was the vengeance for the Crucifixion, which had been the "vengeance" for the Original Sin.
96—'Neath the wings of the Sign.
101—The Lilies of France, favored by the Guelphs. The Ghibellines claim the Eagle for their own party alone.
106—Charles II. of Anjou, leader of the Guelphs (See Purg. XX., 79).
107—The claws of the Eagle.
111—God's Sign is the Eagle.
115, etc.—If men seek only human glory, their quest for God will be that much hindered.
118, etc.—Considering the proportion of reward and deserts (both perfectly commensurate) is part of our happiness.
127—In the heaven of Mercury.
128—Romeo of Villeneuve, chief adviser to Raimundus Berlinghieri, Count of Provence (see line 134).
131—Provence (once deprived of the skilled hand of Romeo) was sorely tried by the House of Anjou.
133—Margaret, married to Louis IX. of France; Eleanor to Henry III. of England; Sancia to Richard of England; Beatrice to Charles I of Anjou.
139—Romeo was banished from Provence. Dante follows a legendary embellishment of Romeo's rise and fall.

CANTO VII

ARGUMENT

Still in the Heaven of Mercury, Beatrice answers some unspoken questions of Dante's, mainly about Creation and Redemption.

"Osanna, Sanctus Deus Sabaoth
Superillustrans claritate sua
Felices ignes horum malahoth!"
While, to its note attuned, revolved its light
Thus sang, methought, that Substance which illumed
By dual splendor sparkled doubly bright.
With it, the rest their former dance resumed
And quick as sparks which quickest are to fly
To me by sudden distance were embrumed.
"Speak to my Lady, speak to her—" said I,
Disturbed by many doubts—within my mind—
"Who pours sweet drops my thirst to satisfy."
And yet that reverence whose fetters bind
—With only B and ICE—all my sense
Made me bow down as man in sleep reclined.

Beatrice suffered little my suspense
But spoke and with a smile so dazzling fair
To make one happy e'en in fire intense.

"It is my judgment which can never err
That thou art puzzled how just punishment
For rightful vengeance anyone may bear.

But of thy mind the bonds shall soon be rent;
Listen to what my words shall now explain:
With weighty doctrine they shall thee present.

When he misused that virtue which a rein
—For its own good—requires, the man unborn
Damning himself, damned all born of his strain.

Whence lay mankind, of all its graces shorn
Down many an age, by grievous errors weighed
Till raised by God's own Word, who did not scorn

Descending where the nature (so long strayed
From its Creator) through His Love Eterne
Only, with His own person one he made.

Now let thy eye my sermon well discern.
When first create, was good and undefiled
This nature which became its Maker's urn.

After, it was (through its own act) exiled
From Paradise, when from the only way
To truth, and from its life, it was beguiled.

If then the assumèd nature we survey
The penalty of which was instrument
The cross, on none so justly ever lay;

While ne'er was so unjust a punishment
If of the victim we appraise the worth
Into whose person was that nature blent.

46 Therefore one action diverse things brought forth:
God and the Jews did please the same death-tree,
And while the Heavens opened, quaked the earth.

49 No longer then should seem so hard to thee
When it is said that just revenge is found
To be revenged, in turn, by just decree.

52 But now I see thy reason tightly bound—
Thought growing upon thought—within a knot
Which greatly thou desirest to have unwound.

55 Thou say'st: 'What I have heard, that well I wot;
But why God willéd—still remains occult—
That in such manner be redemption wrought.'

58 Brother, stands buried this high consult
Beyond the vision of all minds whose wit
In love's own flame has not yet grown adult.

61 But since many there are who try to hit
This mark, albeit few the goal discern,
I shall explain that manner as most fit.

64 God's goodness which all passions can but spurn
Within itself—of its own splendor glows
And thus displays abroad the beauty eterne.

67 Now, what directly from its bosom flows
No end can have, because unchangeable
Is that impression which its seal bestows.

70 What pours from It without a vehicle
Is wholly free, because not governed o'er
By virtues which in things new-fashioned dwell.

73 What more conformed, more pleases It, therefore;
The holy flame illumes all things but where
Greater likeness It finds, there shines It more.

Of such advantages is rightful heir
The human creature: lack of any of those
Must its nobility that much impair.

It is enslaved by sin alone, and grows—
Through it—unlike the Good that all trascends
So that Its light in it but little glows;

Nor can it reach again its eminence
Save it fills in again where guilt erased,
And makes for ill delights just penitence.

Your nature when it felt of sin the taste
—All, in its seed—out of its dignities,
Just as from Paradise, has been displaced.

Nor, if thou look'st at it with subtle eyes,
Could it find passage to its state of yore
Except where either of these fordings lies:

Either would God forgive all of the score
Through goodness only, or would man repay
For his past madness, out of his own store.

Now let thy vision fixedly survey
Th' Eternal Counsel's depths, and of my speech
Close as thy power allows, keep in the way.

Atonement never lay within man's reach;
Humility could not lead him so low
By fresh obedience, as by his breach

Of the same virtue, he had tried to go
Upwards; therefore through his own virtue, man
Could not redeem himself out of his woe.

'Twas left to God, in his own ways to plan
Restoring man to all his rights of birth
—Either or both might have released the ban.—

106 But as a doer's deed has more of worth
The more within its aspect is revealed
The goodness of the heart whence it came forth,
109 E'en so God's goodness whence the world is sealed
Was pleased to put both of its modes in play
So that your wings for upward flight be healed.
112 Nor 'twixt the final night and the first day
Process so high or so magnificent
Was seen, or shall be seen, through either way.
115 For of God's largess 'twas a higher portent
To give Himself so man could rise again
Than if outright to pardon He had bent.
118 And every other mode could not sustain
The claim of justice, if God's only Son
—Humbling himself—had not man's body ta'en.
121 But that of all thy wishes I leave none
Unfilled, I shall go back and clear some place
And thus thy sight shall see with mine at one.
124 Thou say'st: 'On water and on fire I gaze,
On earth, on air, and all thereof compact—
All in corruption after a brief space.
127 Yet all these things come from creative act;
Therefore if what was said was not devoid
Of truth, corruption should leave them intact.'
130 The Angels, brother, and this unalloyed
Region thou see'st, created I may call
In that whole being now by them enjoyed.
133 What thou hast mentioned: elements and all
The things thereof compound from a create
Virtue receive their form corporeal.

Their matter was God-made (in formless state);
The virtue informing them was made likewise
Within these stars that 'round those things rotate.
From the stars' motion and their light arise
The souls of beasts and plants by influence
On a complexion of such potencies.
But the Supernal Good directly sends
The breath of life in you and plants in there
The love wherefore toward Him it always tends.
And from what has been said thou canst infer
About your resurrection, shouldst thou mind
How human flesh was fashioned when that pair
Was made, which was first root of all mankind."

Line 1-3—"Glory, O holy God of hosts—Enlightening with thy clarity—The happy splendors of these realms". The Latin is in the original.

4—The glory of the Imperial crown and of the Heavenly crown.

9—"Embrumed'—misty in the distance.

14—But at the sound of the beginning or of the ending of her name.

25-28—Adam, abusing his free will (which must be kept in check) damned his whole progeny.

31-33—In the body where human nature was joined to the Person of Christ.

35—Human nature was created pure.

40-43—Considering the nature of man, the punishment was just; but (43-45) it was unjust if we consider the Person who had assumed that nature.

59—Have not arrived to full Knowledge of the power of God's love.

67—What God creates directly is eternal (like the Angels).

CANTO VII

70—Such creatures directly produced by God are free from any exterior influence: they are not subject to whatever power may reside in things "new fashioned", that is, arising from secondary causes.

73—The more such free creatures conform (to God's goodness), the more they please It (the same goodness).

76—Man (as to his soul) is eternal, as created directly; he possesses freedom (of will); he is enlightened by the 'holy flame' (see 74) of God's grace: these are man's advantages.

79-81—The human creature, enslaved by sin, grows unlike the Divine Goodness because sin reduces to little the light of that Goodness shining in human creatures.

82-84—Man regains his nobility by "filling in again where guilt has erased" his innocence.

88-90—Human nature could return to its former dignity only in two ways.

103—The way of Mercy or the way of Justice.

110—Mercy and Justice.

112-114—Between the beginning and the end of time there is no instance of such an act of Providence either through Mercy or through Justice.

131—The heavens.

133—Mentioned, in thought only.

134—Water, fire etc. receive their "form" (their entity as such) not directly from God but from a created virtue (or power).

136-138—Their matter was created directly as "materia prima" (that is, having no "form" or definite entity); and so the virtue that was to become their "form" was created in the stars that rotate around the elements.

139-141—From the stars come the souls of beasts and plants, by the influence of the stars on a complexion (combination of elements) possessing a potentiality (disposition) for such souls.

142—The soul of man is directly created, therefore it is eternal.

145, etc.—The reasoning seems to be that since the original parents of mankind were created, even as to their flesh, directly by God, even human flesh has a right to eternity.

CANTO VIII

ARGUMENT

In the third Heaven—of Venus. Amidst many lights, the spirit of Charles Martel speaks to Dante. He deprecates the downfall of his House (Anjou) and explains why personal virtues and abilities are not inheritable.

The world in its great peril fancied once
That Cyprus' Goddess, from the circle third
Would stir love's madness with her radiance,
And honors then not only on her conferred
—Of sacrifices and of votive cry—
The ancient people who so foully erred,
But were Dione and Cupid held in high
Honor; as mother this, and that as son
Who—it was claimed—on Dido's lap did lie.
And so from her with whom I have begun
The name they borrowed of the star that glows
Courting in front or from the rear, the sun.
Without my knowing into it I rose,
But as more beauty I saw my Lady acquire,
'Twas proof to me we were in its enclose.

And as a spark is seen against a fire
And in a voice a voice one may discern
(One standing firm, one going lower or higher)
Within that light I saw some splendors turn;
And had their gyres, methinks, more or less haste
According to their grade of sight eterne.
Storms never rushed, when from cold clouds displaced,
(Noted or not by sight) in downward flight
That would not seem but halting and slow-paced,
If one had seen those points of godly light
Coming to us while they forsook the gyre
First started at the Seraphim's own height.
And from the foremost rank—within their fire—
"Hosannah" sounded in such way that ne'er
Since, for that melody I lacked desire.
Then closer yet to us approached a glare
And: "—We are ready—" was its utterance—
"At thy own will, our joy with thee to share.
With Heaven's Princes we revolve in dance,
Equal in turn and gyre and thirst of love,
To whom out of the world thou spokest once:
'Ye minds who do the third of heavens move';
So filled we are with love that here to bide,
To give thee pleasure, sweet no less will prove."
After my eyes had turned up to my Guide
With humble wistfulness and their behest
Was by her look most gladly satisfied,
They sought again the light who had my quest
Met with such promise; and: "Pray, who are you?"—
Sounded my voice with great desire impressed.

46 In size and brilliance how that splendor grew,
While to the proper joys of its degree
Was added, at my words, a gladness new.
49 Thus grown it 'gan to say: "The world had me
But a short time: had I not died so soon
Much ill would have been spared, that must yet be.
52 Conceals my form from thee the very boon
Of joy whose beams contrive my coverture
As insect hidden in its silk cocoon.
55 Thou lov'dst me much and hadst good cause, for sure;
For had I been below I would have shown
My love for thee more than with boughs mature.
58 That margin laved by the left side of Rhone
After its waters with Sorgue's stream are bound
In time expected me upon its throne;
61 And so that corner of Ausonia, entowned
With Bari, Croton and Gaeta, lower
Than Tronto and Verde where their mouth is found.
64 My front already the crown fulgid wore
Of the fair region which the Danube streaks
After it leaves behind the German shore.
67 And fair Trinacria—by the gulf where shrieks
Eurus the loudest ('tis by gloom o'erhung
—Between Pelorus' and Pachinus' peaks—
70 From sulphur fumes, not from Tipheous flung)
Would even now make ready its royal halls
To kings through me from Charles and Rudolph sprung,
73 Had not ill government which always galls
The subject people, caused that fierce uproar
Of death, of death, within Palermo's walls.

And could my brother see what is in store,
The Catalonians' avaricious greed
He surely would flee, lest he be hurt therefor.
Some care must be bestowed on this, indeed,
Through him or others, lest a greater weight
His bark already laden should impede.
His nature liberal of old, a trait
Of stint has grown and needs such soldiery
Not so intent their hoardings to inflate."
"As I believe the joy that comes to me
So deep from what thy words, my Lord, portend,
As well as I see it, so thou dost see
Where every good begins and has its end,
Dearer it is to me; 'tis also dear
That this in seeing God, dost comprehend.
Thou made'st me happy: now make this matter clear:
(Since from thy words in me such doubts arise)
How from sweet seed may grow a bitter spear."
This I, and—"If I can"—thus he replies—
"Show thee one truth; to what concerns thy quest,
As now thy back, shalt thou then hold thy eyes.
The Good which turns this realm and makes it blest—
This realm thou climb'st—makes its providence
The virtue of which these bodies are possessed.
And not alone the natures are prepense
Within the perfect self-sufficient Thought
But they together with their happy ends.
Because whatever from this bow is shot
Is set to fall on goal pre-purposéd
—As by all things their proper mark is sought.

Were it not so, the heaven thou dost tread,
While it would still produce its sure effects
These were not works of art, but ruins instead.
This cannot be, unless those Intellects
Who move these stars should lack sufficient might,
Or the First failed, who left in them defects.
Shall I limn o'er this truth with brighter white?"
And I—"Not so: that to necessity
Nature could fail, absurd is in my sight."
And he again: "Now tell, worse would it be
If man on earth was not a citizen?"
—"Asking no proof"—said I—"I here agree."
"And could that be but that the states of men,
Through divers offices are differing?
No, if on that well writes the Master's pen."
Thus far he had brought on his reasoning,
Then he concluded: "Your effects, therefore,
Certes from varied roots must have their spring.
Hence one is born a Solon, Xerxes, or
Melchisedech, or he who was to lose
His son while through the air both, winged, did soar.
The circling natures which their seal produce
On mortal wax, their art do well indeed
But this or that abode they do not choose.
Thus haps that Esau differeth in seed
From Jacob, and Quirinus has been said
To spring from Mars, so lowly was his breed.
Engendered nature would forever tread
In the begetters' traces, if elsewhere
By providence of God it were not led.

What was behind, in front of thee lies bare,
But with a corollary I'll have thee drest
That thou may'st see what is for thee my care.
Nature must always fail in active test
If Fortune finds opposed, like seed of grain
That in unfriendly soil should come to rest.
And if to the groundwork by Nature lain
The world below should keep its mind intent
Following her, the people would be sane;
But to the Church you turn a person meant
To girdle on a sword, and such you make
A king who rather was to preaching bent,
And hence your steps the proper road forsake."

Line 2—Venus, especially honored in the island of Cyprus.
8—Dione was the mythical mother of Venus; Cupid her son.
9—As described by Virgil in Aeneid I.
10—From Venus, mentioned at the beginning of this Canto.
12—Venus precedes the sunrise and glows after the sunset.
13—In the third Heaven.
22—Windstorm or lightnings were supposed to originate in the upper and cold clouds.
26—The "gyre" or rotatory motion of their heaven, a motion started in the Ninth or First Moving Heaven, to which preside the Seraphim.
34—With those Angels to whom Dante had addressed a song beginning with the line quoted at line 37. (See 'Convivio' II.)
49—Grown more resplendent.
57—That is, bearing fruits.

CANTO VIII

58—Charles Martel, son of Charles II. of Naples and Sicily, is speaking. He was Count of Provence (on the left bank of the Rhone) and would have been king of Naples (that part of Ausonia—Italy—where are the cities of Line 62, below the mouth of the rivers Verde and Tronto). He had been crowned King of Hungary. He died young, (1295), before his father: much hope had been placed in him by the Guelphs.

65-66-67—Sicily (Trinacria) would also have been ruled by Charles Martel and by his sons descending—through him—from Charles I of Anjou and from Rudolph I., Emperor of Germany, Charles Martel's father-in-law—if.... (see Note to 73-75). Sicily is described by the gulf (of Catania) where the South Wind (Eurus) predominates, which is located between Cape Pelorus and Cape Pachinus and is overhung by the smoke of the Aetna caused by the sulphur within the volcano and not (as fabled) by the breathing of the Giant Tipheous lying under the mountain.

73-75—If the Sicilians had not been driven to revolt. Reference to the famous insurrection known as the "Sicilian Vespers" when Palermo (the capital city) rose against the French garrison.

76—Robert of Anjou, King of Naples at the time of the "Vespers".

77—The greedy Catalonian soldiery in the service of the Anjou.

79-81—Someone must see that the House of Anjou does not accumulate more hatred.

82—Robert, descendant of generous princes, has developed a trait of mean avarice and he needs retainers who will not emphasize his vice by their own greed.

85-90—The Poet's joy probably arises from the thought of the downofall of the anti-imperial Anjou—"Believing that thou see'st my joy (born from thy words) as fully as I feel it, in that supreme point of Goodness, I appreciate my own joy even more". In other words: my joy is greater because I know it is shared fully by thee, and also because you see my joy in God himself.

96—Thou shalt face (see clearly) the object of thy quest.

98—The Providence of God is the virtue (power) of the heavens.

100—Human natures (this refers to query of Line 93) are foreseen and foreordained by God (the perfect Thought) together with their joyful purpose (happy ends).

103—The bow of the Heavens.

106—"The heaven" here means the whole celestial vault.

109-111—Either the Angelic Intelligences presiding to the heavens must be said to lack power, or the First Intelligence (God) must be said to have failed in His creation leaving such Angelic Intelligences defective.

112—"Shall clarify this truth?" (It must be understood always that the influence of heaven, of itself conducive to good result, is subject to man's Free Will. Cfr. Purg. XVI., 67 etc.).

114—Nature cannot fail in what is necessary—to the conduct of the Universe.

116—Member of a political organization.

118-120—A political organization requires diversity of offices, as Aristotle demonstrates in his "Politics".

122—The effects relating to man's social status.

124-126—Legislator, warrior, priest, craftsman (like Daedalus who lost his son Icarus while flying).

127-29—The heavens stamp their seal on men, but without respect to individuals.

131—Quirimus (Romulus) was said to be a son of Mars, to nobilitate his lowly origin.

137—As an added garment to thy mind.

139—Nature fails of its purpose if the circumstances (Fortune) are unfavorable.

CANTO IX

ARGUMENT

Still in the third Heaven, of Venus. Other spirits, whose earthly life was influenced by love, speak to Dante. The Canto ends with an appeal for the liberation of the Holy Land.

After thy Charles did all my doubts explain,
He, fair Clemenza, told the treachery
That was to fall in time, upon his strain;
Adding: "Be silent, let the years go by."
I can but say that for your sufferings
Someone shall afterwards quite justly cry.
That holy splendor's life already swings
Back to the Sun which fills it with its rays
As to the Good sufficient to all things.
O souls deceived, O creatures lost to grace,
Who turn away from the trascending Good,
And only on vanities direct your gaze!
Behold out of the splendid multitude
Comes forth new light; by what desire impelled
Of pleasing me, its outward glow well shewed.

Beatrice's eyes, which as before were held
Fixed upon me, the dear consent I sought
To my new yearning, with their brilliance spelled.
"Pray, grant the wish whereof my heart is fraught,
O blesséd soul, thus proving that in thee"
—I said—"reflects my yet unspoken thought."
Whereon the light which was still new to me,
From the recess whence first I heard it sing
Went on, as one who joys in charity.
"In that woe-ridden region widening
Through upper Italy,—Rialto its bourn
And the Alp-chain whence Brenta and Piave spring—
A hill stands forth, but lifts not high its horn,
Wherefrom, in times now past, came down a flame
Whose stormings gave the country much to mourn.
Its root and that I grew from, were the same:
Cunizza was I called: resplending here
Because this star my spirit overcame.
And yet I here rejoice and hold quite dear
The cause of this my lot, and I grieve not,
Which to the vulgar, hard may haply appear.
Of this bright jewel, which 'mid those that dot
Our heaven closest stands to me, remained
A great renown, and ere it be forgot
This century's turn shall be five times attained.
See now how man should strive for excellence
That other life, after the first, be gained.
But over this no thought that crowd expends
Whom Tagliamento and Adige enclose,
Nor being struck brings them to penitence.

46 But Padua to the Marsh will soon transpose
The stream which bathes Vicenza—and 'tis done
Since of their duty are the people foes.

49 And where become Sile and Cagnano one,
Lords it, his head held high, a ruler bold
While to catch him the web already is spun.

52 Shall yet the shepherd's treason weep his fold,
At Feltro: a crime so foul that never for
A blacker fault one lay in Malta's hold.

55 Too large a vat would be required to store
The blood that by Ferrara is to be shed—
And tired who would by ounces keep the score—

58 By this most courteous shepherd offeréd
To show his party-love: such gifts are quite
Proper for people in that region bred.

61 Mirros there are—on high—whence comes the light
Of God's decrees to us—called Thrones by you—
Wherefor I know these sermons to be right."

64 Here her discourse she ended and I knew
That she was turned elsewhere, because again
Into her former wheel she now withdrew.

67 That other joy of whom the noble strain
Already I knew, became then brilliant so
As finest ruby on which sunlight should rain.

70 Up there new happiness brings greater glow
(Here, brighter smile); but when by sorrow is weighed
The mind, still blacker grows a shade, below.

73 I then so spake: "Thy vision one is made,
O blesséd soul, with God's which sees all things,
Therefore no wish thy knowledge could evade.

Why then thy voice which gladdens, as it sings,
The heavens e'er with those whose holy fire
Is mantled over with three double wings,
Does not speak forth to fill all my desire?
Could I in thee, as thou in me, discern,
Would not my answer thy demands require."
"The greatest vale which to the sea is urn,
Save for the waters"—thus its speech began—
"Which 'round the earth against its limits churn,
Twixt warring shores spreads out o'er such a span
That where the horizon line it had before
It comes to have its true meridian.
Upon that litoral I dwelt of yore
Twixt Ebro and Macra where for a brief run
It parts from Genoa the Tuscan shore.
Almost same rise and setting has the sun
Where Buggea sits and at my native place
Which poured warm blood, of yore, its port upon.
Those who did know my name—and with some praise—
Folco called me; this heaven bears the impress
Of me, as I of it bore deep the trace.
For I and Belus' daughter burnt no less
(She who Creusa and Sichaeus grieved)
Until my locks lost all their youthfulness;
Nor Rhodopeia, she who was deceived
By Demophoon, nor Jove's mighty son
When Iole upon his heart her spell had weaved.
Here no repentance lives, by joy outdone
Which sees the power that ruled and ordered so
And not the guilt, whose memory's quite gone.

106 Here we perceive that art out of which flow
Such wonderful effects; we see the good
For which the world above turns that below.
109 But so that satisfied with plenitude
Thou carry the desires born in this sphere
Further a while my speech must be pursued.
112 Thou cravest to know who fills the light that here
Quite close to me so luminously shines
As doth sunbeam in striking water sheer.
115 Know that within its peace that glow enshrines
Rahab, and in the highest grade is sealed
The place that unto her our sphere assigns.
118 Into this heaven whereto spreads the field
Of earth-cast shadows, she was drawn, first shriven
Of those to whom Christ's triumph was revealed.
121 It was but fit that she, somewhere in heaven,
Were left a trophy of that great conquest
Won by the hands which on the cross were riven.
124 For she shew favor to the noble gest
Of Joshua, upon that Holy Ground
Which the Pope's mind seems scarcely to molest.
127 Thy city, a shoot from him who first was found
Traitor unto his Maker and has wrought
Such woe by his ambition past all bound,
130 Brings forth and spreads the accurséd flower besought
By straying lambs and sheep and which has turned
The shepherd's care into a wolf's onslaught.
133 Hence people leave the Gospel and the learned
Church doctors: the Decretals are alone
Studies as by their edge it is discerned.

And Pope and Cardinals all else postpone
To this: on Nazareth they ne'er reflect
Where Gabriel's wings upon a time have flown.
But Vatican and other parts elect
Of Rome, the graveyard of that soldiery
Which followed eagerly where Peter beck't
From that adultery shall soon be free."

Line 2—Addressed to Clemenza the widow of Charles Martel, then living. The allusion is to the evil arts of Robert of Anjou (younger brother of Charles') to keep out Charles' and Clemenza's son—Carobert—from his legitimate inheritance of the realm of Naples and Sicily.

5—For your sufferings (in your descendant's person) Robert will grieve in his turn.

24—Glad as one gladdened by doing a generous act.

25-27—The region of Treviso, bounded by Venice (where is the Rialto bridge) and the Alps where the rivers Brenta and Piave have their source.

28—Called "Romano".

30—That infamous tyrant Ezzelino of Romano.

32—Cunizza (of the family of Ezzelino), a much married lady.

34, etc.—It may seem strange that this Venus-ruled lady is in heaven and quite satisfied in her former amorous disposition. It must be assumed that her love was in later life turned to God. Her sins were, of course, forgiven and forgotten.

40—Five centuries shall pass.

44—These two rivers enclose the region described above in 25-27.

46—As a reprisal for some war act, the Paduans deflected into a nearby Marsh the river usually flowing close to the city of Vicenza.

48—Fighting among themselves instead of yielding to the Emperor.

49—The city of Treviso, located at the confluence of the two mentioned rivers.

CANTO IX

50—The Seigneur of Treviso, Riccardo da Camino, murdered in 1312.

52, etc.—The Bishop of Feltro, in 1314, surrendered to Robert of Anjou—to be executed, a number of refugees from Ferrara.

53—Malta was the name of a famous dungeon.

62—"Thrones"; name of the lowest rank in the upper triad of Angels. See Par. XXVIII.

67—Cunizza had hinted (Line 37) at the nobility of this other light-spirit.

70-72—"Up there", in heaven; "here", on earth; "below", in Hell.

77-78—Singing with the Seraphim, represented in the O. T. with six wings.

82—The Mediterranean (greatest sea except for that which surrounds the Earth) extends (according to Medieval geography) over 90 degrees from East to West; the horizon line (at day-break on the Asiatic shore) becomes the meridian when Gibraltar is the horizon.

88, etc.—The speaker is Folco from Marseille (Provence), of Genoese origin. Ebro is a river in Spain; the Macra flows between Tuscany and the Genoese territory. A famous troubadour, he turned monk and died as Bishop of Toulouse.

92—Buggea, in Algeria, and Marseille are about on the same Meridian. Marseilles suffered a great slaughter from Caesar's army (See Purg. XVIII., 102).

97—Folco was no less a lover than Dido (Belo's daughter) who, by loving Aeneas, brought sorrow on Sichaeus, her betrothed, and on Creusa, Aeneas' wife.

100—Phyllis (born on Mt. Rhodope) abandoned by Demophoon.

102—Hercules, enamored of Jole.

108—The "world above" is the celestial vault.

116—Rahab, the woman of Jerico who harbored Joshua's spies. In the Empyrean (the highest grade) is established the place that assigns her (merely as a reflection) to this sphere of Venus.

118-120—Rahab was drawn into the heaven of Venus, first among the souls rescued by the triumph of Christ. It was supposed that the shadow cast by the Earth reached as far as the planet Venus.

123—The crucified hands of Christ.

125—Neglecting the crusades.

127—Florence, founded by the Devil. (Lucifer)

130—The gold coin known as Florin.

134—Law Digest.

140—Graveyard of martyrs.

142—The adulterous union of temporal and spiritual power.

CANTO X

ARGUMENT

In the fourth Heaven, of the Sun. The spirits greeting Dante are those of famous Theologians. Twelve of them form a wreath around Dante and Beatrice. Thomas Aquinas, one of them, tells their names.

Looking into his Son with Love (eternal
Utterance which from both of them outflows)
The First ineffable Puissance supernal
Made all that vision or that reason shows
With such an order that of Him a taste
Must needs enjoy who on 't some heed bestows.
Let to those lofty wheels thy eye be raised,
Reader, with mine, and straight into that part
Where is one movement with the other laced;
And there begin to fondly admire that art
So loved by Him—within Himself—that ne'er
From it His contemplation doth depart.
See how that ring which doth obliquely bear
The planets on their way—to satisfy
The earth which calls for them—branches from there.

16 And if their path did not so bending lie
Much virtue in heav'n would lack of its effect
And here would almost die all potency.

19 While, did that parting more or less deflect
From the straight line, the course of things mundane
Here and above, it would quite disconnect.

22 Then, at thy bench, O reader, do remain
And muse on this foretaste in thy own mind
If joy, ere wearying, thou cravest to gain.

25 I shewed the way: so thy own food now find,
For they attract to them all of my care,
The things of which to write I am assigned.

28 I noticed Nature's greatest minister
Who Heaven's stamp upon the world applies
—And of our time his light is measurer—

31 Revolve conjoined with that part of the skies
Mentioned above—along that spiral zone
Where ever earlier appears his rise.

34 I was with him, but in no way was known
My climb to me, as is not manifest
First thought to man, ere in the mind 'tis grown.

37 Through Beatrice's aid I have progressed
From good to better, in such sudden way
That such an act is not by time expressed.

40 How bright needs be those spirits' inner ray
(Those in the Sun I entered) since in spite
Of colors' lack, their splendor they display:

43 From practice, art and genius vainly I might
Ask words to limn that image: yet we can
Hold it by faith while striving for its sight.

CANTO X

46 And if too lowly is the fancy of man
Beside such height, no wonder should create:
Naught brighter than the sun did eye e'er scan.

49 Such the fourth family are there, satiate
By their high Father, who His breathing forth
And His begetting grants them contemplate.

52 Began Beatrice: "Thank for all thy worth
The Sun of Angels who through grace alone
To this sense cognizance lifts thee from earth."

55 Never was mortal heart to orison
So well disposed and never to God's call
To give itself with all its power so prone,

58 As at those words I then became; and all
My love in Him so poured to e'en erase
Thoughts of Beatrice 'neath oblivion's pall.

61 She was not grieved; a smile illumed her face
And of her smiling eyes the beaming light
My mind one-centered parted many ways.

64 And many splendors then came into sight
Making a crown whose center was in us:
Their voice was sweeter than their glow was bright.

67 Sometimes we see Latona's daughter thus
Cintured, whene'er so pregnant is the air
To keep the thread of that wreath luminous.

70 In Heaven's court (and I return from there)
Are many jewels beauteous so and dear—
None could such things out of that Kingdom bear:

73 Such was the song of splendors in that sphere;
Who is not plumed to wing his flight thereto
Expects from a dumb man the news to hear.

After those ardent suns, thus singing, drew
Three times a circle about us, as round
The steadfast poles the closest stars would do,
They seemed as women to their dance still bound
But biding time in silence, listening
Until of the new notes they catch the sound.
This came out of a light within that ring:
"Since grace's ray from which the flame ascends
Of truthful love, brought to new flowering
By its own loving, so in thee resplends
That up that ladder causes thee to soar
Whence but to climb again no one descends,
Who would refuse his beaker's wine to pour
And sooth thy thirst, would lack true freedom's dower
As stream which failed to roll to the seashore.
Thou wishest now to know what plants enflower
This wreath of souls who here their courting pay
To her, so fair, thy heaven-guiding power.
I was a lamb of the good flock whose way
Dominic shows—a path, most certainly,
Where one may fatten well, unless he stray.
This other at my right, to me so nigh,
My brother was and master I attest,
Albert of Koln; Thomas Aquinas I.
If knowledge thou desire'st of all the rest,
Close following my words, come with thy eyes
Scanning the circle of this garland blest.
The next of flames out of the smile doth rise
Of Gratian, he who gave both laws such aid
To gain acknowledgment in Paradise.

106 And the next jewel in our choir displayed
That Peter was who like the widow once,
At the Church's feet his humble treasure laid.
109 The fifth—of all the greatest radiance—
Breaths forth such love that the whole world below
The news of him with fond desire demands.
112 There lives that lofty mind where such deep flow
Was poured of knowledge that, if truth is true,
No second ever rose so much to know.
115 Then see the splendor of that torch which through
The Angels' nature and their ministry
So deeply pierced, while mortal breath it drew.
118 That advocate of Christian history
Out of whose words Augustin much has ta'en
Smiles in that light which smallest shows to thee.
121 Now, if thy mental eye with me dost train
From light to light thus following my praises
With thirst but for the eighth dost thou remain:
124 There joys, as now on all things good he gazes
The holy spirit who reveals the world—
If man well hears—and its fallacious mazes.
127 Down in Cieldauro lies the body whence hurled
It was of old from martyrdom and ban
To come to be, within this peace, impearled.
130 Beyond, these glorious spirits thou may'st scan:
Isidore, Bede and then Saint Victor's friar
Who, contemplating, was e'en more than man.
133 This, whence thy gaze returns to me, the fire
Is of a spirit who amidst his stern
Reflections did to quicker death aspire:

See there eternally the splendor burn
Of one who taught Straw Alley: Sigier
Who reasoned truths which did men's hatred earn."
After, as horloge which calls us to stir
—The hour God's bride with matin-singing tells
Her love so that the Spouse may cherish her—
(One part the other draws on and impells
And doth with such sweet sounding tintinnate
That spirit well disposed with loving swells)
Such like I saw the glorious wheel rotate:
Equal in tone and sweetness voice to voice
Gave answer, but to feel it one must wait
Till he gets there where timeless grow our joys.

Line 1-6—The Father contemplating the Son (whence proceeds the Holy Ghost) created all that human sight or reason apprehends, with such order etc.

9—The Poet is now in the Heaven of the Sun: this is conjoined with the Ram and the Scales. In this position the equatorial and the zodiacal movement cross each other.

10—The wisdom of the Creator.

13-15—The zodiacal ring (carrying the planets around the earth as if they were called—attracted—by it) branches obliquely (in respect to the Equatorial ring) from that point mentioned in line 9.

16-18—If the path of the planets were not bending (away from the Equatorial path) their powers would be diminished and almost all potency (capacity for action) on earth would die out (for lack of determining influence).

19-21—If the parting (of the Zodiac) deflected more or less than it does from the straight line (of the Equator) the course of Nature would be upset. (Not only as to celestial influences but also as to meteorology, etc.).

CANTO X

22-24—Go on by yourself meditating upon the order of Nature.

28—The Sun brings the greatest influence of Heaven upon the earth.

32—The "spiral zone" is the path of the Sun between the Tropics (Medieval Cosmology). The Sun was now in the position mentioned in Line 9—that is, between the Winter and the Summer Solstice when his "rise" is at an earlier time every day.

34, etc.—The climb was sudden, as sudden as the arising of a new thought: realized immediately as it is born.

40—Those spirits outshine the Sun.

43, etc.—The Poet, unable to describe such view asks the readers to believe in the truth of it and strive to reach heaven where such sight will be granted to them.

50-51—The Procession of the Holy Ghost and the Generation of the Son.

63—My mind, immersed in God alone, was then divided on several objects.

67-69—The halo around the Moon, when the air pregnant with vapors retains the colors.

73—It was one of the things which cannot be carried away.

86—The ascent of heaven, permitted only to those who will be ultimately saved.

99—Albertus Magnus, master of Thomas Aquinas.

104—Gratian, founder of Canon Law but a master also of Civil Law.

107—Peter Lombard, the "Master of Sentences" who in the preface to his great work compared himself to the widow of the Gospel who had offered her mite.

109—King Solomon, author of the Canticle of Canticles.

115—Dionysius, the Aeropagite, who wrote of the Angelic Hierarchies.

118—Paulus Orosius, Christian historian of the V. century whose method was followed by St. Augustin.

125—Boetius (V-VI century) who wrote "Of the consolation of philosophy".

127—He was buried at Pavia in the church of St. Peter "in ciel d'oro" (of the golden sky).

128—"It" refers to the spirit of Boetius whose undeserved execution by Emperor Theodoric is called "martyrdom." The "ban" is the exile of life on earth.

131—Isidore, famous theologian from Seville—died 634 A. D. Bede, is the famous English scholar known as the Venerable Bede—died in 735. St. Victor's friar is Richard, a native of Scotland, who lived many years in the monastery of St. Victor in Paris. A famous mystic —died in 1173.

133, etc.—Sigier of Brabante, famous teacher of the University of Paris (located in "Straw Alley"). His theological ideas were much controverted. Died early in the XII. century.

140—At dawn, the monks rise to sing Matins.

CANTO XI

ARGUMENT

The spirit-light of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the famous theologian of the Order of Saint Dominic, tells the story of Saint Francis' life.

How senseless is the mortals' fond desire
And how those reasonings are empty and vain
Which make it beat its wings close to the mire!
In Physics' some, some in the Law's domain
Were busy, and others made the Church their mart;
Some sought by force or trickery to reign;
Some thrived in robbing, some in trade or art;
Some in the revels of the flesh entrapped
Grew weary: some chose sloth for their own part;
While I from whom all earthly bonds had snapped
With Beatrice in the celestial sphere
Was then with such a glorious welcome rapt.
I saw again the flaming circle veer
And as each star resumed its former site,
Fixed as a candle on its chandelier,

A voice I felt to sound within the light
Previously vocal, which began anew,
Smiling methinks, as it was doubly bright:
"As from its rays this splendor I take on
Thus, while the Eternal Light I contemplate
I see the cause whence are thy thoughts bespun.
Doubting, thou wishest that I may dilate
My meaning into words so clear and plain
That to thy mind become its purport straight.
When "One may fatten well" I said—again
When lately I affirmed "No second rose";
But here a sharp distinction must obtain.
That Providence from which creation flows
Ruled by such wisdom that created sight
To reach its bottom vainly doth propose,
So that the Bride (of Him who gave the plight
Of his own blessèd blood in wedding her
With loud outcries) to her Beloved might
Hasten with firmer step and readier,
Two princes foreordained unto her weal
To watch on either side with equal care.
One's soul was filled with a seraphic zeal,
The other's wisdom was a wonder sent
On earth a Cherub's splendor to reveal.
Of one I now shall speak, for both are meant
Whichever's praises anyone recount
Since were their labors to one goal intent.
Between Tupino and the stream whose fount
Is on the hill where blest Ubaldo dwelt,
A fertile coast spreads out on that high mount

Whence cold and warm is by Perugia felt
Through the Sun gate; Nocera and Gualdo weep
On its far side, to bear hard yoke compelled.

Out of that coast, and where becomes less steep
Its grade, upon the world arose a Sun
As this at times doth up from Ganges leap.

Therefore in speaking of this place let none
Call it Ascesi as that would be scant praise,
But only as Orient it should be known.

Hardly he had started on his glorious race
When he began upon the earth to pour
Of his great virtue some consoling grace;

For, still a youth, he dared to meet in war
His father, for a lady of such a sort,
Welcome as death she were, at pleasure's door.

But boldly facing his spiritual court
And "coram patre" in holy wedding bound
He grew each day to her closer consort.

Eleven hundred years and more went 'round
Since 'reft of her first spouse, scorned and forsaken
She dwelt, and till this man no suitor found.

Nor aught availed to hear she was unshaken
With old Amyclas in the face of him
Whose voice in all the world could fear awaken.

Nor aught availed that she, stubborn and grim,
While even Mary stood below afflicted,
Mounted with Christ upon the crosséd limb.

But that my words be clear and more restricted
Francis thou must discern and Poverty
In those two lovers that I have depicted.

Their happy aspect, their faithful harmony,
Their love and wonder, their regard so sweet
For holy thoughts were a resistless plea.

The venerable Bernard bared his feet
First of all others to pursue that peace,
And slack he thought himself though running fleet.

O hidden riches, true and lasting ease!
Aegydius, then Sylvester barefoot sped
After the groom, so did his lady please.

Thus happy with his spouse he onward led
As father and as master his small troop
In humble cord-girt tunic habitèd.

Nor did he bend his eyes in coward droop
For being Pietro Bernardone's son,
Nor the whole world's contempt could make his stoop

But royally his purpose he made known
To Innocent and from his very tongue
Had for his Order the first benison.

Then as the humble folks grew to vast throng
Following him whose glorious life 'twere right
That in the highest Heaven it be sung,

In yet another crown was nobly dight
Through Pope Honorious, by the Paraclete,
The holy will of this Archimandrite.

After—a martyr's fate eager to meet—
He had before the Sultan's face superb
Preached Christ and those who walked after His feet,

And found those people yet too hard to curb
Into conversion, lest his gain be none
He turned to harvesting the Italic herb,

'Twixt Arno and Tiber on that scabrous stone
By Christ on him the final sign was traced
Which for two years upon his members shone.
Then as it pleased to Him who had so graced
His body, to call him to the reward
Deserved by one who thus himself abased,
As rightful heirs, his brethren he implored
To keep with them the Lady he held most dear,
To whom a faithful love they should accord.
Then from its bosom winging itself clear
The illustrious soul returnéd to its reign
And for its body willed no other bier.
What man he was must now to thee be plain
That other mate who helped to keep the bark
Of Peter straight upon the stormy main.
And such a man was our own Patriarch.
With faultless wares—thou can'st well understand—
Are laden those who step in his foot-mark.
But for a food of strange and novel brand
With gluttons' keenness his disciples yearn
So that o'er divers crags they oft disband.
And as the more their faithful guide they spurn,
Wandering here and there without his aid,
With less of milk they to the fold return.
There are indeed who feel of harm afraid
And cling close to their shepherd, but so rare,
Their cloaks with little clothing could be made.
Now if my language has not been too spare,
If to my speaking thou hast been intent
And is thy mind of all I said aware,

In part thy wishes should remain content
As thou seest where the plant is split away,
And it is clear what the thong-bearer meant:
—Where one may fatten well, unless one stray."

Line 13—The wreath of lights already spoken of in the previous canto.

17—St. Thomas Aquinas.

19—From the rays of the Eternal Light of God.

25—Speaking of his own Order, the Dominican, St. Thomas had said: "Where one may fatten well, unless he stray." (See Par. X., 96).

26—Pointing to the light in his own circle which held the spirit of Solomon, St. Thomas had said: "No second ever rose so much to know" (Par. X., 114).

27—The distinction probably means that Solomon had "no second" in pre-Christian wisdom and knowledge of God.

31—The Church, the Bride of Christ.

33—On the cross was consummated the mystical wedding of Christ and the Church; Christ died "emissa voce magna", crying aloud.

35—St. Dominic and St. Francis.

43—Tupino, a small stream near Assisi, the birth-place of St. Francis.

44—The hill of Agubbio where the hermit St. Ubaldo lived in retirement.

47—"Porta Sole": name of a gate of Perugia.

50—A Sun: St. Francis.

53—Ascesi or Assisi would mean only "ascension" or "elevation".

59—For the sake of My Lady Poverty.

61—Before the Bishop of Assisi, Francis spurning his father's riches threw back to him even the garments he was wearing.

62—The Latin is in the original, of course. A legal expression meaning "in the paternal presence".

65—Christ, first spouse of My Lady Poverty.

68—Amyclas, a fisherman whose character strengthened by utter poverty was admired even by Caesar who visited his hut while about to cross the Adriatic, according to Lucan in "Pharsalia".

CANTO XI

79—Bernard of Quintavalle, an elderly and respected merchant of Assisi, first to follow St. Francis.

83—Earlier of the friars. The friars wore sandals and often no footgear at all.

92—Pope Innocent III.

98—Pope Honorius III confirmed and extended the privileges granted by his predecessor to the Franciscan friars.

101—It is said that St. Francis was allowed to preach before the Sultan of Egypt; at any rate he attempted a missionary expedition in North Africa.

106—The "scabrous stone" is the Alvernia mountain, in the Tuscan Casentine, part of the Appennine system: on its flanks the Tiber and the Arno have their source.

107—The Stigmata.

114—Poverty is the basis of Franciscan rule.

117—St. Francis desired to be buried unshrouded, like a criminal.

119—"That other mate" is St. Dominic.

121—St. Thomas, the speaker, was a member of the Dominican Order.

138—According to most commentators, the "thong-bearer" is St. Thomas himself. The Dominican friars wear a leather thong as a ceinture.

CANTO XII

ARGUMENT

Still in the Fourth Heaven—of the Sun. The spirit of the Franciscan Bonaventure relates praisefully the life of Saint Dominic, founder of the Preaching Friars.

Before the blesséd flame had time to fill
The sound of the last word it had begun,
Started to turn that stone of Heaven's mill.
It had not yet a circle fully done
When came another girding it around—
Motion with motion, song with song, at one.
Song which our Muses and our Sirens' sound
Excells with those sweet trumpets' resonance
As ray direct doth over its rebound.
Such as on tender clouds two archéd spans
Appear, which are in shape and color twin,
Whenever Juno her handmaid commands;
From that without is born the one within;
Belike the speech of that enamoured maid
Consumed, as mist by sun, by love's chagrin.

And here foreknowledge makes us unafraid
(For of God's pact with Noah that is the bond)
That never will a flood all earth pervade;
Thus of th' eternal roses the jocund
Garlands went circling us in double ring
And thus to outer, inner did respond.
After the dance and such great welcoming
With song and sparkles (each pellucid glare
Joyful and bland the other echoing)
All at one point and by one will they were
Becalmed as eyes whose lids at once must part
Or close, as the same wish affects the pair;
From one of the new lights, out of its heart,
A voice was heard and quickly toward its place
As needle to the star, my sight did dart.
And it began: "The love who by his rays
Kindles my beauty, prompts me now to tell
Of th' other leader who gave mine such praise.
Where stands the one, the other should as well
Be brought; their glory at once 'tis meet to cry
Since both in the same battle did excel.
The soldiery of Christ which cost so high
To arm anew, was following its sign
Bedraggled, and with tardy step and shy.
The Emperor whose rule knows no confine
Of time, provided to the troops dismayed—
Through grace alone, not that they were condign.
And, as I said, unto his bride brought aid
With these two champions at whose work and word
Gathered again the people who had strayed.

CANTO XII

There, in the place where first the bloom is stirred
By softly zephyrs, of the foliage green
Which we then see the soil of Europe gird,

Not far inshore from where beats the marine
Behind whose curtain, after his long course,
The sun so hides that by no man he's seen,

Sits happy Callaroga, upon those shores
Protected by the mighty shield which shows
Above and underneath, a lion's force.

The loving suitor of our faith arose
Therein to life, the athlete consecrate
Mild to his own and fearsome to his foes.

And was his mind so filled—soon as create—
With lively virtue that, ere seeing light,
It moved his mother to vaticinate.

When he and Faith were joined in nuptial rite
Beside the holy fount and for the dower
Of mutual salvation they gave plight,

The woman who for him spoke at that hour
In dream perceived the wondrous crop unfold
That out of him and of his heirs would flower.

And that his name would show his inner mold
Hence moved a spirit to give him such name
Which of his Master the possession told.

Dominic he was called: I voice his fame
As of the husbandman elect of Christ
To be of aid, His garden to reclaim.

Servant and herald truly he seemed of Christ
For the first love that in his heart did flare
Was for the first advice proclaimed by Christ.

Ofttime his nurse, upon the pavement bare
Found him in silent prayer ecstasied,
As if to say: "This is on earth my share."
Truly his father Felix was indeed,
Truly herself Joan his mother shewed,
If rightful the translation we concede.
Not for the world for which are now pursued
Thaddeus—with such zeal—and Ostian,
But for the love of Heaven's truthful food,
Great Doctor he became in a brief span
Of time, and to the vineyard gave his heed
Which, if the dresser shirks, soon waxes wan.
And from the Chair whence those in guiltless need
More kindness used to get—which is not due
To it, but to its holder, bastard breed.—
Not to dispense of six for three or two,
Nor yet the gift of the first vacancy,
And not the thithes which to God's poor accrue
He asked, but leave to lead a soldiery
Against the errant world, that seed to save
Of which stand four-and-twenty plants 'round thee.
With doctrine armed and zeal then forth he drave
Eager to fill his apostolic trust
As from deep seated vein out springs a wave.
On heresy's wild brambles then percussed
His impetus—and there with harder blows
Where the resistance had been more robust.
Formed then from him were divers smaller flows
Which through the garden catholic so run
That on its shoots a greener foliage shows.

CANTO XIV

If such, one wheel the chariot stood on
In which the Holy Church made her defense
And in the field the civil struggle won,
Quite clear should be to thee what excellence
The other had which Thomas pleased to sing
—Before I came, with courteous eloquence.
But now the track made by the outmost ring
Of its circumference none tries to find—
Where were the lees, but mouldy dregs now cling.
His family in the course to them assigned
Walked straight of yore, but so has changed their pace
The foot in front they throw toward that behind.
But very soon shall come the harvest days
To show that evil crop—then shall the tare
Complain the barn has not for it a place.
I say, if leaf by leaf one scanned with care
Our volume, one might find a page to-day
And—"I am what I was—" would still read there.
Not from Casale or Acquasparta: they
Who come from there to keep our ordinance
Relax or narrow what it means to say.
I am the life of Bonaventure, once
From Bagnoregio—if great was my career
Unworthy cares did never soil my hands.
Illuminato and Agostino are here
Of the barefootéd poor of the first days
Who wore the girdle and to God were dear.
Hugh of Saint Victor here, and here, too, rays
Peter the Glutton's and the Spaniard's light
To whom twelve books, below, bring shining praise.

Nathan the Prophet, the Metropolite
Chrysostom, Anselm and Donatus, he
Who did of the first art the rules indite.
Raban is here and he resplends by me
Who in Calabria held an Abbot's seat
And who possessed the gift of prophecy.
Such paladin to sing as it is meet
Moved me the warmly-hearted kindliness
Of Brother Thomas and his words discreet:
And all the rest were moved with me no less."

Line 3—The wreath formed by the twelve spirits of the preceding Canto.
5—Another similar wreath appeared.
10-12—The rainbow, known to the ancient as Iris, mythologically the messenger of Juno.
13—The inner ring of the rainbow seems a reflection of the outer one.
14—Echo, a nymph, who died of love-sickness.
16—Speaking again of the rainbow.
19—The eternal roses: the blessed spirits.
30—The compass needle.
31—The spirit of St. Bonaventure, one of the early followers of St. Francis, is now speaking (see below, 127).
33—St. Dominic, founder of the "Preaching Friars" or "Dominicans".
46-48—The Spanish peninsula, where Spring is earliest in Europe.
49—The western coast of Spain.
52-54—A Town in Castille. The arms of Castille show a lion beneath a castle on the left quarters, and a lion above a castle, on the right quarters.
61—At his baptism.
64—The God-mother also had a vision of his future glory.

CANTO XII

68—"Hence": frome Heaven.

69—"Dominic"—from "Dominus": "belonging to the Master".

75—Poverty.

79—"Felix": happy.

80—"Joan", from the Hebrew: "favored by grace".

83—Thaddeus was a famous physician; the Ostian, a bishop of Ostia known for his comments on Canon Law.

88—The Chair of Peter.

96—The spirits surrounding Dante, in two garlands of twelve lights each.

103—Various smaller institutions inspired with the Dominical ideal.

108—For the preservation of Christial society.

110—The other "wheel" is Saint Francis. (See Canto XI.).

112-113—Saint Bonaventure deplores the Franciscan decadence. The limit of St. Francis' ideal of life is neglected for a narrower practice.

114—As in a vat: the lees are the preserving element, the dregs the mark of decay.

117—They walk backward.

124—Hubert from Casale, Mathew from Acquasparta: reformers of the Franciscan Order, deviating from the Founder's spirit.

127—Bonaventure, one of the great mystics: became Bishop and Cardinal: died 1274.

130—Of the early Franciscans.

133—Canon of the St. Victor's monastery in Paris; author of many Theological works. Died 1142.

134—Of the same monastery. Had deserved the name before joining the Church. Another famous theologian. Died 1198.

134—The "Spaniard" is Petrus Hispanus (the name he used on his many books) who became Cardinal and Pope (John XXI). Died 1277.

136—The one who reproached King David.

137—Patriarch of Constantinople: the "golden voiced". St. Anselm, born in Aosta, North Italy: died Archbishop of Canterbury in 1109. Aelius Donatus, Grammarian of the IV. century: was the greatest authority on grammar in the Middle Ages.

139—Rabanus Maurus, Archbishop of Mentz. Best Latin writer of his age. Died 856.

140—Abbot Joachim, of Calabria. Rather a legendary person. Died in 1202.

142—That is, Saint Dominic.

CANTO XIII

ARGUMENT

Still in the IV Heaven, of the Sun. The spirit of St. Thomas explains certain questions unsolved in Dante's mind. The Canto closes with some moral precepts.

Let him who wants to gather well what struck
My vision now, imagine (and hold fast
The image, as I speak, like steady rock)
Fifteen starlights which cheer the heavens vast
—In various parts—with such a shining blaze
That breaks all denseness in the air amassed;
Let him that Car imagine to whose race
Gives room our heaven's bosom day and night
So that its pole for turning lacks no space;
Let him imagine that horn's mouth, so bright
Opening at the summit of the stem
Round which revolves the wheel at greatest height;
To have in heaven made two signs of them
As that which Minos' daughter (when the cold
She felt of death) asked for her diadem,

And one its rays within the other hold
And both of them in such a way gyrate
That while one forward, th' other backward rolled.
This, somewhat close to truth, would adumbrate
That constellation and that double dance
Which 'round the point I held, I saw rotate;
Since truth itself is far past all of man's
Knowledge, as the first heaven turns around
With greater speed than Chiana through our lands.
And Bacchus there or Paean did not sound:
One Nature there was sung and Persons three
As well two Natures in one Person bound.
The measure filled of dance and psalmody,
Graciously turned to us each sainted flame—
In every care rejoicing equally.—
After, from those one-minded Holies, came
A voice: that of that light which had, before,
Of God's most humble poor extolled the fame.
"As now one straw is threshéd on the floor—"
It said— "and in the barn is laid its grain,
To thresh the other sweet love calls once more.
Thou think'st that in the breast wherefrom was ta'en
The rib to fashion that most beauteous face
Whose palate cost to the whole world such pain,
And so in Him who poured such stream of grace
Before and after the heart-piercing lance
That his atonement well all sins outweighs,
To human nature's utmost sustenance,
All mental light to have been there infused
By Him, of both the fashioning puissance.

CANTO XIII

Hence, wondering, on my statement thou hast mused
Where I have said, above, "no second rose"
To that sweet joy in the fifth light reclused.

Fix well your eyes on what I now disclose
And thou shalt see my sermon and thy thought
As center in a ring, in truth repose.

All things that die and those that perish not
The splendor are of that Idea (naught else)
Which is by our Seigneur, with Love, begot,

Because the Light (which in such manner wells
Out of its Source, with It remaining One
And with the Love which, third, in that 'One' dwells)

Through goodness only—as in mirrors sun—
Pours its radiation in nine Substances
Its timeless unity no way undone;

Thence it comes down to the last potencies,
From act to act, until it brings about
(Becoming less) but brief contingencies.

And by these last I mean (to clear all doubt)
Things generated which the heavenly wheels
Turning, produce with seed or e'en without.

The wax of these oft with the force that seals
Does not accord, and hence unequally
The stamp of that Idea the wax reveals;

And hence it happens the same sort of tree
Yields more or less of fruits, and in mankind
Mind-power has not, from birth, the same degree.

If were the wax to the last point refined
And had its highest power the heavenly vault
With all its light the stamp would there be signed,

But nature gives it e'er with some default;
Not otherwise she works than artist might
Who has a craftman's skill, but hands that halt.
But when the Primal Virtue's limpid sight
Is by Love's warmth unto the sign brought forth,
Perfection reaches there its fullest height.
Thus all the power was given to the earth
All animal perfection to embrace
And so was made the Virgin to give birth;
Therefore I gladly thy opinion praise:
Ne'er human nature was, or shall be, found
Such as in those two members of the race.
Should I not further this matter expound—
"But then how was this man without a peer?"—
Thy words would surely such beginning sound.
But so that things obscure may show quite clear,
Think who he was and by what reason led,
When asked, to seek what he conceived most dear.
Well thou canst see from what I now have said
That king he was and, to be truly a King,
Wisdom he sought, of other gifts instead.
Not that he might achieve the numbering
Of heaven's motors, or 'from absolute
With a contingent, absolute may spring?',
Or "A Prime Mover is beyond dispute?"—
Or "in half circle may triangle lie
With no right angle as an attribute?"—
My former words and these must clarify
As kingly wit that knowledge past compare
Whereto the arrows of my meaning fly.

106 And thou shalt see that "rose" to kings refer
(If thou look'st unto it with proper sight)
Who are quite many but the good are rare.
109 With this distinction take my word, and right
With thy belief shalt see my sentence meet—
About the primal sire and our Delight.
112 And let this be like lead unto thy feet
To slow thy motion, as of man forspent,
Toward "yes" and "no", when view is incomplete.
115 For amidst fools he is most excellent
Who affirms without distinction or denies,
Whichever side his steps be haply bent.
118 For oft it happens that the rash surmise
Inclines a man unto the wrongful part;
Then wit is bounden by affection's ties.
121 More than in vain shall from the moorings start—
Not coming back such as he forth did go—
Who throws the net for truth and lacks the art.
124 Parmenides, Melissus, Bryson shew
Clear proof of this (with many more beside)—
They who went forth and witherto none knew;
127 Sabellius, Arius and such fools whose pride
Made them be like a blade to Holy Writ,
Where none but twisted forms may be descried.
130 The people, too, should not too quickly sit
In judgment, like a man who weighs his corn
Still in the field and not for harvest fit.
133 For I have seen all winter long, the thorn
Seemingly bide unbent and obstinate
Then on its top a gentle flower was born.

136 And I have seen a ship which fast and straight
Had run its course all o'er the stormy brine
Meet in the haven with a hapless fate.
139 Let not Sir Martin or Dame Bertha opine—
Seeing one rob, another offer gifts—
To see them quite as in the mind divine,
142 For this may fall, and grace may that uplift."

Line 1, etc.—To visualize the 24 lights surrounding Dante (see preceding Canto) the reader should imagine 15 of the brightest stars scattered through the heaven, plus the 7 of the Chariot (or Ursa Major), plus the 2 which form the opening (like a horn's end) seen in Ursa Minor, which constellation has at its other end the Pole star—stem around which turns the highest wheel—or the highest heaven (Primum Mobile).

13—"To have in..... made": grammatically governed (exactly as in the original) by "Let him imagine." The 24 stars are arranged in the form of 2 wreaths.

14—Ariadne, daughter of Minos, at her death requested that her crown of flowers be turned into a constellation, which was done by Bacchus.

16-18—One of the garlands of lights was within the other. Their motion was opposite.

24—A river in Tuscany, of very slow flow.

24—Paean, the cry in honor of Apollo.

30—In their "care" of the dance, of the singing and now of attending to Dante.

32—Saint Thomas.

37— In Adam.

40—In Christ.

44—"To have been infused"—grammatically governed (as in the original) by "Thou think'st" (line 37).

47—Speaking of Solomon, St. Thomas had said (Par. X., 114) "no second rose to know so much".

CANTO XIII

52-54—All creatures are but a ray of the "Idea" (the Word—the Son) of God the Father ("our Seigneur") which "Idea" is begot with "Love" (the Holy Ghost).

56—"With It", or with the "Source", h. e. the Father.

59—The nine Angelic Intelligences ruling the nine heavens.

61-63—The Light (of the Word of God) descends from the nine heavens to the lowest potentialities (in terrestrial creatures) until, becoming smaller and smaller it produces "brief contingencies" which are (64-66) the creatures of the vegetable and mineral kingdoms.

67, etc.—The receptive power of terrestrial things is often inapt to gather the full impression of the stamp from that "Idea".

73, etc.—If the wax (receptive power of creature) were perfect and the power of heaven (74) at its best, the stamp of the "Idea" (75) would be perfect; but nature (76) gives it (the wax) imperfect and therefore creatures are imperfect; except when the warmth of Love (grace of the Holy Ghost) brings the full aspect (79) of the Primal Virtue (God the Father—Creator) unto the sign and then we have a perfect creature (81).

84—Through Grace, the Virgin Mary was made worthy to give birth to the Savior.

87—Adam (see 37) and Christ (40).

92—Solomon was a King and asked for the gift of wisdom.

98—Heaven's motors: the Angels.

99—Whether from two premises, one absolute (axiomatic), one contingent (relative) may come a deduction of absolute value (necessarily true).

100—Must be conceded the existence of a First Mover, itself unmoved? Such questions were asked in the Schools: they were of no concern to a true King.

104-106—Thomas had said, speaking of Solomon (Par. X., 114) "no second ever rose so much to know".

110—The belief that Adam and Christ were the wisest of men.

124—Greek philosophers.

127—Christian heretics.

128—Usually explained: a swordblade reflects objects distortedly.

139—As one might say: Mr. Brown or Mrs. Jones.

CANTO XIV

ARGUMENT

St. Thomas explains how the risen bodies of the just will still be surrounded with light. Other splendors come into the Poet's view and he realizes his ascent into the fifth heaven, of Mars.

To center from the rim, or with a spin
Opposite, water in round vessel flows
When struck or from without or from within.
And quickly into my mind the image rose
Of what I say, soon as in silence stood
The life of Thomas that in glory glows,
For there was born a plain similitude
From his and from the speech my escort blest
Was pleased to start, after he did conclude:
"Though not in words nor e'en in thought exprest,
This man has need to reach the very root
Of other truth, so that he be at rest.
Tell him whether the rays which convolute
Your substances shall e'er with you remain,
Eternally, as now they are, acute;

And if they so remain, pray, then explain:
When you again shall be made visible
Shall not your sight some hindrance thence sustain?"
As when doth greater joy draw and impell
Those dancing in a ring, they all at once
By gladder acts and louder voice so tell;
Thus at her eager and devout demands
Showed greater gladness by their note's new power,
And by their tournaying, those holy bands.
Whoe'er complains that we must face death's hour
To live above, saw not in Heav'n's domains
The sweet refreshments of the eternal shower.
That ONE and TWO and THREE Who lives and reigns
In THREE and TWO and ONE, the same for aye,
And while uncircumscribed, all things contains—
Three times was sung by each in that array
Of holy spirits, with such melody
That any merits amply it would repay.
Afterwards came a gentle voice to me
Out of the smaller circle's godliest light
(Such haply as gave to Mary Heav'n's decree)
Who spoke: "While will be lasting the delight
Of Paradise, so long the effluence
Of love shall spread 'round us this raiment bright.
Upon love's fire its clarity depends,
The fire upon the vision; this is vast
As vast the grace which on our worth descends.
Indued with holy and glorious flesh at last
Our person then more grateful thanks shall raise
For being thus in its true whole recast.

46 Hence the grace-given light shall grow a-pace
Which is donated by the Good Supreme
And which conditions us on Him to gaze.

49 Hence must the vision grow: and must the gleam
Grow of the fire which is lit from there
And so must grow its irradiating beam.

52 Yet, as the coals give forth a flaming flare
While shines more brilliant their own living heath
And undefeated is their proper glare,

55 Shall be the splendor forming this our sheath
Outshined by flesh of splendor more intense:
The flesh which still is hid, the earth beneath.

58 Nor shall such brilliancy benumb our sense:
The organs of the body shall be strong
For all delight we may experience."

61 So—to my mind—quick and alert each tongue
Was to the "Amen" from within both choirs
To show how for their bodies they did long.

64 And haply for their mothers, for their sires—
Not for themselves alone—for all held dear
Before they had become eternal fires.

67 And lo! all 'round (to them in brightness peer)
Upon the former light a luster grew,
As more and more grows the horizon clear.

70 Such as upon the deepening evening blue
Flicker new substances throughout the sky
So that their aspect seems, and seems not, true;

73 New substances I seemed there to descry
With a beginning vision, and beyond
The former circles, their own circle ply.

True light that Holy Spirit doth effund!
How in thy sudden burning did I stare
And how my eyes were overcome and stunned!
But Beatrice appeared so passing fair
In smiling, this I must leave unexplained
With other sights my memory could not bear.
From that my eyes their faculty regained
To lift them up, and, with my Lady alone,
I saw that higher bliss I had attained.
Well was my rising up to me made known
Seeing the planet smile with such red blaze
That o'er all former lights, meseems, it shone.
With all my heart and with the speech whose ways
Are common to all men, 'fore God I set
The proper offering for such new grace.
And while the fire of sacrifice not yet
Had died within my breast, I came to know
That with acceptance gracious it had met.
For then—within two beams—I saw the glow
Of splendors red and bright that prompted me
To cry: O Helios who adorn'st them so!
As, made of varied lights, the Galaxy
Between the earth's two poles doth whitish shine
(Wise men about its substance disagree),
Thus made those beams the venerable sign
—Surrounded by star-lights in deepest Mars—
As, in a circle, quadrant's line o'er line.
The flight of genius here my memory bars
For in that cross appeared—like lightning—Christ,
So that I find whate'er example scarce.

But they who take their cross and follow Christ
Shall fain escuse the failing of my phrase
Once in that white they see the light of Christ.
From horn to horn, and so from top to base,
Lights were in motion and strong sparks outflung
Whenever joined in passing: thus we gaze
Here on most minute bodies, short or long,
Rapid or slow (their aspect ever new)
Straight or distorted, as they move along
A beam of light by which is streakéd through
At times a shaded place which for defense
People with all their art and skill construe.
As harp or viol whose temper, taut, depends
On many strings, brings forth a music sweet
E'en though no tune therein one apprehends,
Thus, from the lights I saw, a composite
Melody gathered 'round the cross, and I
Felt rapt, though was their hymn past my conceit.
Yet I well know it sounded praises high:
"Arise and conquer!" reached therefrom my ear,
But had no sense for me, though heard, that cry.
So deeply at heart enamored I felt here
That never, to the present point, a thing
Had held me fast to it with bonds so dear.
Perhaps my verse too boldly seems to sing
Slurring the pleasure of those beauteous eyes
In which to look sooths all my coveting,
But he who knows more active, as they rise,
Those living seals of every loveliness
(Since here I had not seen the others' guise)

Will pardon me for what I now confess
To make excuse, and see that I speak right:
That holy pleasure here I fail to stress
For purer grows, in climbing, its delight.

Line 7—The speech of Thomas coming from the rim of the garland of lights toward the center (where Dante was): that of Beatrice, from the center outward.

17—After the resurrection of the body.

25—Death cannot be feared if one has seen the joys of Heaven.

28—The God One and Trine.

35—Solomon. (See Par. X, 109).

41—The vision (of God) is a supernatural gift of grace: it is then as great as the grace which comes to be added on the individual (and natural) worth of each "love".

71—Stars beginning to appear.

82—"From that", from Beatrice's smile.

84—To the fifth heaven, of Mars.

88—The unworded speech of the soul.

96—"Helios" is "sun" in Greek: God.

101—In the center of the planet's body.

102—The sign of the Cross.

110—"For defense" against the sunlight.

131—Counting for less the pleasure found in Beatrice' eyes.

133, etc.—One who sees how the "living seals..." the spirits stamped with all the beauties of God) grow more active, more efficacious in their action) as they rise—to a higher heaven—will understand why nothing had held me so enamored—up to this point: considering that here is the heaven of Mars I had not yet looked into "the others'" appearance: had not yet looked to the eyes of Beatrice.

CANTO XV

ARGUMENT

In the fifth heaven, of Mars. An ancestor of his greets Dante and speaks of the happy life in old Florence.

The will for good in which its purpose finds
Always the love which moves in rightful way
(The will for evil is the selfish mind's)
Silenced of that sweet-sounding lyre the play
And thus came to be stilled those holy strings
Which heaven's hands now tighten now allay.
Could they be deaf unto our clamorings
Those substances who mute together grew
To give to me the will whence prayer springs?
'Tis meet that endlessly be made to rue
Who, loving objects which may not endure,
Eternally of that love themselves undue.
Just as across the tranquil sky and pure
A sudden fire is seen at times to race
Moving the eyes which stood, till then, secure—

Seemingly like a star which changes place
Save that no loss comes to the body whence
Its glow derives and this lasts a brief space—
Such from the horn which to the right extends
To the foot of the cross flew down a star
Out of the cluster which therein resplends;
Nor was the gem detached from its own bar
But o'er the radial list it rushéd on—
To fire behind soft marble similar.
Thus, love impelled, Anchises' ghost did run—
If faith deserves our Muse of loftiest height—
When in Elisium he saw his son.
"O sanguis meus, O superinfusa
Gratia Dei! Sicut tibi, cui
Bis unquam coeli janua reclusa?"
I looked at it—after so spoke the light—
And then my eyes unto my Lady I turned,
And hence and thence a wonder smote my sight,
Because within her eyes a smile so burned
That of my grace and of my Paradise
To touch the end I thought I now had earned.
Then joyful to my ears and to my eyes
The spirit added other things, profound
So that to them my reason could not rise;
Nor hid through choice was what he did expound
But through necessity: his concepts soared
Beyond the mark of every mortal bound.
When of his ardent charity the chord
Was slackened so that past the altitude
Of mortal minds would not o'ershoot his word,

CANTO XV

This was the thing which first I understood:
"Blesséd be Thou forever, One and Trine,
For such great kindness to my progeny shewed!"
And then: "The long and pleasant fast of mine
Felt reading in that mighty tome, where white
Stays white fore'er and black stays the black line,
Thou hast resolved, my son, within this light
Whence I speak now, and this to her I owe
Who gave thee plumage for this lofty flight.
Thou think'st that unto me thy concepts flow
From Him, the First of all—as numbers pour
(Like "five" or "six") from "one", if that we know;
Hence, who I am and why rejoicing more
I seem to thee—no question dost propose—
Than all the happy throng who here adore.
The truth thou hold'st: lesser or greater glows
Of this our life into that mirror gaze
In which ere thoughts are formed, the thinking shows.
But that the Love in which for endless days
I keep my sight and whose sweet joys defy
Slack of desire, may shine with brighter blaze
Let openly and frankly and joyfully
Thy will be sounded now with thy own word
To which decreed already is my reply."
To Beatrice I turned myself: she heard
E'en ere I spoke, and at her smile to me
As if by new-born wings, my will was stirred.
I started: "When the First Equality
Appeared to you, your feeling and your wit
Became of equal weight for each of ye,

For, to the Sun by which both warmed and lit
By heat and light you were, they equal are
So that no parallel herein would fit.
But will and means are, in the mortals, far
Apart (the cause of it to you is clear)
And their wings' plumage is dissimilar.
I feel in me that discord, I, a mere
Mortal: and I reply with heart alone
To the paternal welcome given here.
But thee I supplicate, O radiant stone
Engemming this most precious coronet,
Sate my desire and let thy name be known."
"Pleasure in thee I found, expectant yet
Of thee; thy root I was, best of my boughs!"—
I heard these words, as his reply's outset.
After, he said: "The one from whom thy house
Is named (a hundred years and more has he
Circled the mount amidst the humbled brows)
Was my own son and great-grandsire to thee.
Certes, with thy good deeds to him thou owest
To shorten his long-pressing misery.
Florence within the ancient walls enclosed,
Whence still she gets of tierce and nones the call,
Sober and chaste and all at peace reposed.
She knew no little chains, no coronal,
No women fancy-shod, no belts so bright
That would, more than the person, men's sight thrall.
Not yet at birth a daughter would excite
Her father's fear, since time and dower then used
From a just measure had not taken flight.

No homes were by their family unused;
Not yet Sardanapalus there had gone
To teach the evils in a chamber loosed.

Nor your Uccellatoio as yet outshone
E'en Monte Mario, which as in the rise
Thus in the fall shall also be outdone.

Bellincion Berti I saw in humble guise
Gird bone and leather; from the mirror turned
His wife, her face with only nature's dyes.

Nerli and Del Vecchio I saw, and neither spurned
To wear a pelt unlined for coverture:
With flax and spindle were their dames concerned.

O happy they! And each of them was sure
Of her own burial place: none was reduced
To solitary bed for France's lure.

One lovingly the cradle watched, and used
In soothing murmurings the idiom
By which at first the parents are amused.

Another, while she drew her spinning from
The staff, told tales amidst her family
About the Trojans, Fiesole or Rome.

It would have been such wonder then, to see
Cianghella or Saltarello as, to meet
Cornelia or Cincinnatus now 'twould be.

To such reposeful, to such beauteous seat
Of civic life, to such a firm and staid
Citizenship, to such a hostel sweet

Mary gave me, with loud outcry in aid
Invoked—and in your ancient Baptistry
Christian and Cacciaguida I was made.

136 Moronto and Eliseo were to me
Brothers; my wife came from the Paduan plain
And from that source thy surname comes to thee.
139 I followed then Emperor Conrad's train
And with his Soldiery he girt my flanks
So did my valiant deeds his favor gain.
142 I also fought amid his arméd ranks
Against that evil law whose followers
Usurp your rights (for which they may give thanks
145 Unto your shepherds): there that crowd perverse
Delivered me from all world fallacies
The love of which on many souls brings curse:
148 From martyrdom I came unto this peace."

Line 4—The beams of the cross (see Par. XIV.) are compared to the frame of a lyre whose chords are the blessed spirits.

14—A falling star.

22—It means—probably—that the "gem" (the flaming spirit) kept along the "bar", or the "radial list" of the cross.

25—Aeneid, VI., 835.

28-30—The Latin is in the original: "O scion of my blood! O over-abundant—Grace of God! Like unto thee—to whom was ever the gate of heaven open twice?".

36—That my joy could not go further.

49—"My long desire (for thee) derived from reading (of thy future coming) in God's book" (God's mind).

53—Beatrice.

55-57—Deducted from God, the First Being, as other numbers are deducted from the fundamental "one", if this is known.

62—The mirror of God's mind.

CANTO XV

73—The "First Equality" is God. Your feeling and your capacity for expression became of equal power.

76-78—Your feeling and wit are of the same kind as God himself, the Sun etc.

83—With the heart, words failing.

93—In the first cornice of Purgatory. But Dante has not met this first Alighiero.

98—The bells of the Benedictine Abbey which was within the first circle of walls.

104—"Time", the age of marriage came not so early as in Dante's time.

106—Probably: not too big so that parts were not in use.

107—The corrupted King of Assyria.

109-111—The hill named "Uccellatoio" (whence one has a view of Florence) had not surpassed Monte Mario (whence one has a view of Rome). The ruin of Florence shall be worse than that of Rome.

112—Prominent citizen of old Florence.

115—Other prominent citizens.

120—The husband going to France as a merchant.

128—Unworthy characters, of Dante's own time.

133—The Blessed Virgin, invoked at his birth.

135—Cacciaguida seems to have lived in the first part of the XI. century.

136—Nothing is known of them.

137—Her name was Alighiera.

139—Conrad of Suabia who fought in the Second Crusade.

140—Made him a Knight.

143—Against the Mohammedans usurping the rule of the Holy Land.

CANTO XVI

ARGUMENT

Still in the fifth Heaven, of Mars. The Poet's ancestor, Cacciaguida, descants upon the history of ancient Florence and the change in costums.

O mortals' puny blood nobility,
That here, with our affections languishing
Thou movest the people so they boast of thee,
'Twill never be to me a wondrous thing
Since where our appetites turn not astray
(In heav'n I mean) I felt of pride the sting.
A cloak thou art that quickly shrinks: if day
By day its loss is not provided for,
Time's scissors move around and cut away.
With "you", which Rome had countenanced of yore
(Its family doth now least persevere
In it) my own address began once more.
And Beatrice, then not quite so near,
Seemed, by her smile, like her who coughing gazed
On the first written fault of Guinevere.

"You are my father"—thus my thoughts I phrased—
"You comfort me to speak with such bold mood,
I feel by you above myself upraised.
From many streams receives a plenitude
Of joy my mind, whence a new joy is mine
Because so much can be by me withstood.
Tell me then, first dear seedling of my line,
Who your ancestors were, and tell, I pray,
What years did mark your childhood with their sign.
Tell me of Saint John's fold, how—in your day—
Ample it was; and those who there did claim
The highest seats, tell me what names had they."
Coals are by blowing wind fanned to a flame:
And there I did perceive that brilliant light
Upon my blandishments flare up the same.
And just as in my eyes it grew so bright
Thus with a voice of sweeter suavity
—Though out of modern use his words were quite—
"From the salute of AVE"—he said to me—
"To when my mother, now in life eterne,
Gave birth to me and solved her pregnancy,
For its fivehundred-eightieth return
Had come this fire beneath its Lion's feet
To stir anew the flames that in it burn.
I saw the light in our ancestral seat
Which stood where in the race you run each year
First would the runner the last borough meet.
This of my ancestry enough to hear:
More fitting to be silent than declare
Their origin, their names and their career.

46 Upon that time, all those who arms could bear
(Twixt Mars and Baptist was the city's span)
Were but one fifth of those who now live there.

49 But civic blood, unspoiled by Campi's scran,
Certaldo's, or Fighine's, could be seen
Pure in the very humblest artisan.

52 Better those people I have named had been
For you mere neighbors and Galluzzo yet
—And so Trespian—the limits Florentine,

55 Than have them in—and then the stench regret
From Aguglione's knave and Signa's cur
Whose eye on barratry already is set.

58 If those who in the world most foully err
Had not of a step-mother played the part
But of a mother kind, to their Seigneur,

61 A Florentine who trades in bank and mart
Would have returned to Semifonti's lands
Where his grandfather plied the pedlar's art.

64 The Counts would have Mount Murlo in their own hands
And in Acone would be the Cerchi still;
The Buondelmonti in Greve's vale, perchance.

67 Mixture of persons always boded ill
To city life: from that its glories fade,
As man is harmed who eats more than his fill.

70 'Tis for blind bull much harder to evade
A fall, than for blind lamb; oft, apter blow
Than by five swords, is struck by single blade.

73 On Luni and Urbisaglia a thought bestow:
How they have gone, and how the selfsame way
Are Chiusi and Sinigaglia about to go.

And hearing how the families decay
Shall not seem thing of hard and novel sort
Since even cities are corruption's prey.
Of all your things, some time, Death makes his sport—
As of yourselves—but some appear immune
For they last long—and your own lives are short.
As with its turns the heaven of the Moon
Hides and reveals the shores in endless swing
Thus comes and goes from Florence fortune's boon.
It should not then appear a wondrous thing
What I shall say of Florence folks, great then,
Whose fame is hidden now beneath Time's wing.
Come Ughi and Catellini to my ken;
Filippi, Creci, Ormanni e Alberichi,
Though waning, each a worthy citizen.
Ancient—and great as now may vainly seek ye—
Della Sannella I saw, Dell'Arca, too,
And Soldanieri and Ardinghi and Bostichi.
Upon the gate now laden with a new
Felony (and its weight cannot sustain
The bark, but ruin will quite shortly ensue)
The Ravignani dwelt: they from whose strain
Count Guido came, and all whose title from
The noble Bellincione since have ta'en.
The Della Pressa had already clomb
To civic rule and hilt and pommel gilt
Already Galigaio kept in his home.
Great was the Bar of Vair, nor yet did wilt
Sacchetti, Giuochi, Fifanti, Barucci,
And Galli and those shamed by their measures' guilt.

And so the root whence born were the Galfucci
Was great already, while to the curule chair
Had been the Sizii drawn and Arrigucci.

How great I saw those who so illy fare
Now, through their pride! How, then, the golden balls
Adorned, in Florence, all great deeds of her.

So did the sires of those whom custom calls,
Whene'er a vacancy in your church occurs,
To sit and fatten in the lofty stalls.

That overbearing stock that, dragon-fierce
On all who flee, is like a lamb indeed
To those who show their teeth or else their purse,

Was growing, but from such a humble seed
That Ubertin Donati grieved to be
By his father-in-law joined to their breed.

Was Caponsacco in the Market: he
Who came from Fiesole; good burghers were
The Giuda and th' Infangato family.

Though it defies belief, this I declare
As true: in that small circle led the gate
Which took its title from those of the Pear.

And everyone who bears a shield ornate
With the great baron's arms whose worth and name
Saint Thomas' festive day doth renovate,

Knighthood and privilege from him doth claim,
Though with the commoners he has connived
Who girds to-day that sign with a new frame.

Gualterotti, Importuni already thrived
And Borgo would have been quiet even more
Were they of their new neighbors still deprived.

The House which your unending sorrow bore
(For of your just disdain death was the price
And with it ends your happy life of yore)
Was honored then, and so were its allies.
O Buondelmonte, what great woe was born
When wast adviced to flee its nuptial ties!
Many were happy who are sorrow-torn
Had God conceded thee to Ema's stream
First time thou came'st to Florence to sojourn.
Yet it was due that broken stone—I deem—
Which guards the bridge, that Florence should provide
A victim, of her peace in time extreme.
Having those families, and more beside,
In such a calm I saw repose our town
That there no cause for weeping could abide.
With them I saw the people in renown
And justice grow, that never were her flowers
Hanging from banner-pole, head turnéd down,
Nor had division changed the white of ours."

Line 2—On earth, where the heart is weak.

10—It was believed that in the early Empire the Romans began to address the better class with "you" instead of the former universal "thou".

11—Romans, even now, use the "thou" indiscriminately.

13-15—In the story, Lancelot confesses his love to Queen Guinivere; the coughing of her duenna was an encouragement to the lovers who then exchanged their first kiss.

20—The fact that I can rejoice so greatly is in itself a new joy.

25—Florence, whose patron is Saint John.

34—From the Annunciation to the birth of Cacciaguida the planet Mars ("this fire") had completed 580 revolutions passing beneath the constellation of the Lion, whence comes—as it were—a renewed vigor to its flame. That would be 1091 A. D.

40, etc.—On St. John's day a horse race is run in Florence. It crosses the various boroughs of the town and where the horses reach the last borough (called St. Peter's) there stood (and stand now, 1931) the ancestral houses of the Alighieri.

47—Between the bridge head of the Old Bridge—where stood a statue of Mars—and the Church of St. John the Baptist.

49—Neighboring towns.

52—Better if the village of Galluzzo and that of Trespiano (south and north of Florence—but a few miles away) had remained the limits of the Florentine territory.

56—A Baldo from Aguglione and a Fazio from Signa (towns a little farther away) had become important citizens in Florence. The latter had been charged with malfeasance in municipal office.

58—If the Guelphs had been devoted to the Emperor, this (states Dante) would have kept the old townsmen at home and avoided civil strife, banishments and influx of strangers.

61—Reference to a Lippo Velluti who became a great banker and trader in Florence. He had come from the country town of Semifonte which at one time threatened to overshadow Florence: it was razed to the ground.

64—The Counts (Guidi) would still have the castle of Montemurlo—often fought over by Florence and Pistoia.

65—The Cerchi family would still be in their castle of Acone, in the Sieve valley.

66—The Buondelmonti's possessions were in the valley of the Greve: all these families caused great troubles in Florence.

73-75—Important cities which had decayed in Dante's time.

88-93—Families who had disappeared or lost importance.

94—The Gate called St. Peter's (corresponding to the borough of the same name).

95—Their felony consisted in passing to the Guelph Party.

97-99—Bellincione Berti (See Par. XV., 112) belonged to the Ravignani family. A daughter of his married a Count Guidi: Count Guido-guerra (most famous of the family) sprang from them.

101—Having been knighted he had the privilege of using a sword with gilt pommel and hilt.

103—The Pigli family: its escutcheon was a bar of "vair", which is a sort of squirrel with spotted skin. The "vair" in the text refers to the color.

105—The Chiaramontesi who were discovered to be using false measures in some dealing with the municipality.

107—The "curule chair" or some high office.

109-111—The Umberti and Lamberti whose arms included golden balls: had been prominent in many civic enterprises.

112-114—"So did", h. e. equally prominent were the Tosinghi and Visdomini who had a right to occupy the possessions of the Bishopric of Florence, during a vacancy.

115—The Adimari family.

119—That his father-in-law (Bellincion Berti) gave another daughter to one of the Adimari.

125—In the small circle—of the ancient walls—one entered through the Gate called "of the Pear" because there stood the houses of the Peruzzi whose arms showed a pear.

127-129—Several Florentine families received the privilege of quartering in their escutcheon the arms of Baron Hugh of Brandenburg, Marquis of Tuscany, (died 1001) whose death is remembered on the day of St. Thomas the Apostle (Dec. 31st) by religious exequies in the Benedictine Abbey he founded.

131—Giano Della Bella, of a family so honored by the Great Baron, had sided with the common people in a revolt against the nobles. He had surrounded the arms of Baron Hugh in his shield with a fringe of gold. Was exiled from Florence in 1294.

134—Borgo (name of a street) was the residence of the two families mentioned in 133. There took up residence the Buondelmonti of whom in 136 etc.

136, etc.—One of the Buondelmonti failed to keep his word to marry a young lady of the Amidei, in order to marry one of the Donati. This happened in 1215 A. D. and was the origin of unending civic strife in Florence. The "disdain" (137) for such act was paid by bloodshed and the end of peace.

139—In Cacciaguida's time the Buondelmonti and the Amidei (allied by blood) were in honor.

140—The young man was cajoled to go back on his word to marry into the Amidei.

143—The Buondelmonti crossed the torrent Ema coming from their ancestral castle into the city.

145-147—A broken statue of Mars was set at the head of the Old Bridge: a victim was due to Mars to signify the end of Peace. This Buondelmonte was slain under that statue by friends of the Amidei.

152—Captured standards of the Florentines (bearing the Fleur-de-lys) reversed on the pole, in derision.

154—Division into Guelph and Ghibellines; the latter kept the original shield of Florence (white lily on red) the former had changed. it into red lily on white.

CANTO XVII

ARGUMENT

Still in the fifth heaven, of Mars. At Dante's request, his ancestor Cacciaguida explains the veiled prophecies already heard by the Poet as to the future events of his life.

As he who came to Clymene, to know
What against him was said, with certitude—
(Whence fathers are to children's wishes slow)
Like such I was; my wish well understood
Beatrice and that soul in fiery dress
Which first had moved for me upon the rood.
Hence spoke my Lady: "Let thy eagerness
Send forth its flame, that it be displaid
Quite clear, outside, its innermost impress.
Not any greater by thy words is made
Our knowledge, but to root in thee the use
To speak thy thirst so that it be allayed."
"Dear stem of mine, whom this high state imbues
With power (like that of earthly minds which see
No triangle can have two sides obtuse)

To be aware of each contingency—
Before it happens—in that center where
All past and future times must present be,
While I proceeded, under Virgil's care,
Upon the Mount which doth the spirits heal,
And down the world where only is death's despair,
To me were spoken, of my future weal,
Ominous words, albeit 'gainst the sore
Buffets of fortune, quite foursquare I feel.
Therefore to know what fortune holds in store
For me is all for which I now aspire
Since dart which is foreseen seems to come slower."
Such were my words directed to that fire
Which first had spoken: thus I did obey
Beatrice's will, proclaiming my desire.
Nor through some riddle, which in other day
Ensnared the fools, before the sacrifice
Of God's own Lamb, who takest the sins away,
But with clear reasoning and with precise
Latin replied that love paternal, closed
In his own smile yet patent to my eyes.
"Contingency, whose limit uttermost
Only within your matter's book extends
Is in God's vision clearly all exposed.
But no necessity it gathers thence
Except as from the sight wherein its course
Is mirrored, ship that down the stream descends.
From there, as harmony that sweetly pours
From organ to the ear, unto my sight
Comes what for thee the future's bosom stores.

46 As Athens sent Hippolytus in flight
Through his step-mother's cruel, faithless plot
Thus shalt thou have to flee from Florence's spite.

49 This willed already, already this is sought,
And this he soon shall do who plots this snare
Where Christ is every moment sold and bought.

52 Rumor will blame the losing side (no rare
Custom of men) but vengeance on the part
Of Truth, to truth itself shall witness bear.

55 Each thing thou shalt abandon which thy heart
Most dearly cherishes; thus will offend
Exile's sad bow in shooting its first dart.

58 Then thou shalt know what salty flavor lend
Tears unto others' bread, and what hard trail
'Tis others' stairs to climb and to descend.

61 But what will make the most thy shoulders quail
Will be the evil, senseless company
With which thou shalt fall down in that sad vale.

64 For, all ingrate, in their mad perfidy
Will rage 'gainst thee; but soon, that to atone,
Their temple reddened, and not thine, shall be.

67 Their beastliness will soon be shown,
Proved by its course; 'twill be for thee great praise
To have thy party made of thee alone.

70 Thy first resort and haven in those days
The noble Lombard's courtesy shall prove
Who, on the ladder, heaven's bird displays.

73 He shall evince toward thee such kindly love,
You two will choose twixt yieldance and request
That for which others are least quick to move.

With him shalt see the one who was impressed
At birth with the strong power of this sphere
To carry him to many a wondrous geste.

Not yet this worth is to the people clear
For his new age: because not yet have played
Round him this circles but for their ninth year.

But mark! ere shall the Gascon have betrayed
Great Henry, sparks of his great worth will show:
Wealth he shall spurn, of hardships unafraid.

Of his magnificences all will know:
So noted, that in singing of his praise
Will not be missed the voice of e'en his foe.

Look thou for him and for his bounteous grace:
To alter stations many he shall compel
And rich and poor through him will change their place.

Keep written in thy mind—but not to tell—
This too, of him"—and added many a thing
E'en to their witness hardly credible.

Again he spoke: "Son, this interpreting
Clears what was said to thee: the snares are these
Which—hidden now—but a few turns will bring.

Yet let no hatred for thy neighbors seize
Thy heart; within thy life, shall be received
By them the judgment on their perfidies."

After, by silence, showed it had achieved—
That holy soul—the shuttling of its thread
Upon the warp I offered to be weaved,

I spoke as one who in his doubts is led
To ask advice from person of clear sight
And in whose will a righteous love is bred.

"My father, well I see how in its flight
Time spurs 'gainst me, to give a blow so fierce
That harder strikes him who most shirks the fight.
'Tis well I am forearmed against this curse;
Lest, helpless of my dearest place to fend
The loss, I lose the others through my verse.
Down through the world whose bitter has no end
And on the Mountain from whose summit fair
My Lady's eyes have called me to ascend
And then through heav'n, from shining layer to layer,
Such things I have cognized, which if retold
For many a strong and souring taste will bear.
Yet if to truth I am a friend not bold
I fear that I may fail to live with those
By whom this times will be considered old."
The light which doth my treasure's smile enclose
And yet reveals, at first did brightly spark
As golden mirror struck by sunbeams glows;
He then thus answered me: "A conscience dark
Because of others' shame or of its own
Will feel the stinging of thy sermon stark.
But ne'ertheless, aside all weakness thrown,
Let be thy vision wholly manifested
And let them scratch on whom the itch has grown.
Because if at first taste men are molested
Hearing thy voice, a vital nourishment
It will prove after, when it is digested.
Thy cry shall by like wind, more violent
In striking summits which are soaring higher;
To thee of honor no small argument.

For this, has shown to thee each heav'nly gyre,
The Mountain and the pit for e'er woe-ridden
Only the souls who did some fame acquire:
For to the hearer's mind no rest is bidden
Nor steadfast faith, by such example's force
Whose root remains to him unknown and hidden,
Nor by another proof of covert source."

Line 1—Phaeton asked Clymene, his mother, whether he was really the son of Apollo. Satisfied, he insisted so that Apollo let him drive the chariot of the sun, with consequent ruin.

4—Eager to obtain from Cacciaguida some information about his (Dante's) future life on earth.

13-18—The state of bliss gives power to the spirits to see with the certainty of an axiom the things yet to happen (contingencies) in God himself, the "center where", etc.

37-39—"Contingency" is what may happen, or not. Its limits are therefore the world of man's actions (the book of your matter) and what by them is affected.

40-42—God's foreknowledge (shared by the heavenly spirits) does not make necessarily determined the actions of man.

43—From God's vision.

46—Phaedra, stepmother to Hyppolytus, through her calumnies had him banished.

50—Boniface VIII.

53—On the part of God.

61-63—The unworthy companions of Dante in his exile.

70-72—Alboino Della Scala, seigneur of Verona, whose arms showed an eagle upon a ladder.

75—That is, compliance will be quicker than demand.

76—Can Grande Della Scala, famous Ghibelline warrior, possibly the "Hound" upon whom Dante's hopes were pinned (see Inf. I-101, etc.).

82—Before Pope Clement V. shall have fought against the Emperor Henry VII. at his coming into Italy.

96—A few turns of the heavens.

110—Lest, having lost Florence, I lose other refuges through my Comedy.

CANTO XVIII

ARGUMENT

Cacciaguida points out other blessed spirits. The Poet is then raised to the sixth heaven, of Jupiter, which influences earthly justice. The Spirit-lights arrange themselves in the form of an Eagle, symbol of the Empire and of perfect justice.

And silent now that blesséd mirror joyed
Only on his word, and to my own I clung
In which sweet taste with bitter was alloyed.
And she who led me Godward—rung by rung—
Said: "Change thy thoughts, think rather how I dwell
Close unto Him who lightens every wrong."
My Comfort's loving voice could but impel
My turning unto her: in her blest eyes
What love I saw I must renounce to tell.
Not only such a task my words defies
But—if it has no guidance—to survey
Its former journey memory vainly tries.
This much about that juncture I can say
That my attention, as I gazed on Her,
Felt all its other yearnings fall away,

The while Eternal Pleasure beaming there
Directly, from Beatrice's beauteous face
Made me content with its reflected glare.

Her lustrous smile held me as in a daze
And this I heard: "Turn thee around and list:
Not only within my eyes shine heaven's rays."

As in a visage here at times is wist
The inner yearning, when 'tis lively so
That a man's soul in it has wholly uprist,

Thus in the flaming of the holy glow
To which I turned myself, his wish I read
On me some further sermon to bestow.

This his beginning: "Here, in this fifth spread
Of this high tree whose fruits eternal bide,
Whose leaves are deathless, from its summit fed,

Blest spirits dwell, whose name was loudly cried
On earth, before to heaven they were borne:
On them would every Muse her song spread wide.

Therefore look at the cross, upon each horn;
The one whom I shall name therein shall act
As in a cloud the fire which thence is torn."

I saw the name of Joshua attract
A light whose splendor moved—the cross along—
When it was called: the word quick as the fact.

When mighty Maccabaeus' name was sung
I saw the flash of other whirling flame—
And of that top was happiness the thong.

And thus at Charlemagne's and Roland's name
My gaze intent could follow other two,
As eye which follows falcon to his aim.

William and Renouard then came in view
Upon that cross: Duke Godfrey I did admire
And Robert Guiscard then my vision drew.

Moving and mingling with each other fire
After, the soul by whom I was addressed
Showed me his artistry in heaven's choir.

I turned me then upon my right, in quest
From my fair Dame of what to do upon 't,
Craving her will by word or sign expressed.

Such clarity and such joy I did confront
Deep in her eyes so that her aspect glowed
Beyond all former and her latest wont.

As when he feels delight of higher mode
In his good works a man can appreciate
His progress day by day on virtue's road,

Thus I perceived that now I did rotate
With wider arc in a new heaven's frame,
Seeing that miracle yet more ornate.

And like the change upon white visaged dame
(Which comes in such brief time) whene'er her face
Will drop away the burden born of shame,

When I had turned, such change came to my gaze:
The heaven shone as if 'twas tempered white
And the sixth star held me in its embrace.

And I perceived within that jovial light
The love there present with its sparkling beam
Mark out like living words unto my sight;

And like the birds arising from a stream
Make of themselves a round or a straight row
(To be rejoicing for their feed they seem)

Thus holy creatures, each set in its glow,
Sang while a-flying, growing so compound
That D and I and L their form would show.

First, singing, to its note each moved around,
Then, grown to be one of these signs, the fires
Ceased for a while their motion and their sound.

Pegasaean Goddess, thou whose power inspires
Men's minds to glory and renders them diuturned
As they, with thee, the cities and th' Empires,

Give me thy light, that clearly be discerned
Their figures, such as them in mind I bear—
Thy power in these brief lines, by all be learned.

For thirty times and five showed there a-glare
Vowels and consonants in proper place;
I marked each part as each seemed spoken there.

DILIGITE JUSTITIAM, the trace
Of fire put verb and noun in that design;
QUI JUDICATIS TERRAM closed the phrase.

Then ordered stood the lights upon the outline
Of the fifth word, so that now Jupiter
Like silver streaked with gold appeared to shine.

Other descending lights I saw concur
And crown the "M"; there singing of the Good
(Methinks) that calls to them, they ceased to stir.

As when one strikes a brand a multitude
Of flying sparks is lifted up (thereon
The fools with auguries themselves delude)

A thousand lights and o'er I saw anon
Mount up from there, some rising more some less
As given them by their enkindling sun.

CANTO XVIII

And when each one did in its place quiesce
An eagle's neck and head I there descried
Which the new fire was fashioned to express.

He who paints there does not require a guide:
Himself is guide: in Him we know the seat
Of virtue whence the nests' form is supplied.

The other joys who seemed to find their meet
At first, in their enflowering the "M"
With little motion did the plan complete.

Sweet star! Such lights I saw, so many of them
That proved to me our earthly Justice' way
Wrought from the heaven which thou dost engem.

Wherefore the mind divine I humbly pray
—From which thy power and motion have their spring—
To look where comes the smoke which clouds thy ray;

So that again may of its wrath the sting
Feel those who trade within the Temple's gate
Fashioned by miracles and suffering.

Soldiers of heaven whom I contemplate,
For all on earth lift up your orison
Since bad example makes us deviate.

Upon a time, a war with swords was won
But now 'tis waged denying here and there
The bread which the good Father takes from none.

Think, thou who writest but thy scroll to tear,
Of Peter think and Paul; for they live still
Who sowed the field thou spoil'st with thy ill care.

Haply thou say'st: "I trust in the good-will
Of him who listened to the desert's call
And was a martyr through a dancer's skill

136 And I know not the Fisherman nor Paul."

Line 2—"Word" means the mental expression or thought.

11—Except it has supernatural help.

25—In the light of Cacciaguida who had spoken as in the preceding cantos.

28, etc.—The fifth circle of the heavens similar to a tree nourished from its summit.

42—Like the thong or string that makes a toy-top revolve, happiness made the spirit-light revolve.

46—William of Orange, famous Crusader: Renouard a companion of William.

47—Godfrey of Bouillon, leader of the 1st Crusade.

48—Founder of the Norman dynasty in South Italy: also a Crusader.

51—The wonders of the heavenly song.

58, etc.—As a man experiencing more pleasure in his good deeds realizes that he has achieved greater virtue.

63—That "miracle" is Beatrice.

64, etc.—As a woman's face grows quickly white again as soon as the red of shame is conquered.

69—The planet Jove whose light is white. (Mars was red).

71—The love of God inspired the spirit-lights to arrange themselves in the form of words.

79, etc.— Each light moved while singing: when they had formed their place in one of those "signs" or letters, they stood still.

82, etc.— Any Muse; their myth being connected with that of Pegasus, the winged horse. Here especially Calliope, Muse of heroic poetry. Men are eternized ("diuturned") by the power of poetry through which they eternize cities and Empires.

86—The figures made by the spirit-lights.

91-93—"Love justice, you who have power to judge on earth".

95—The heaven of Jupiter or Jove.

105—As willed by God.

CANTO XVIII

109, etc.—This painting follows no earthly fashion: it comes from God himself, source of all powers and even of the instinct that shapes the birds' nests.

112—Those lights which at first seemed satisfied with "crowning the "M" (98) moved so to complete the design of the eagle.

115, etc.—I realized that the heaven of Jupiter influences earthly justice.

120—The evil which clouds earthly justice.

121, etc.—That those who misuse the power of the Church, established by miracles and martyrdom, may feel the wrath of the "mind divine".

128—By excommunications.

130—Spoken of a contemporary Pope—not clearly identified—who would withdraw his excommunications if it was made worth his while.

134—St. John the Baptist; that is the gold florins which bore the Saint's image.

CANTO XIX

ARGUMENT

In the sixth Heaven, of Jupiter. The symbolical Eagle speaks about the mistery of Grace, and how remote it is from human intellect. An invective against certain Christian Kings concludes the Canto.

Stood thus before my eyes, with wings outspread,
The beauteous image filling with delight
The souls to sweet fruition gatheréd.
Each seemed like a small ruby in which so bright—
From the sun's splendor kindled—burned a ray
That thence it would reflect into my sight.
And what I now endeavor to portray
No voice e'er spoke, no ink on parchment drew
Nor figured ever was in fancy's play;
Because I saw the beak—and heard it, too—
When, speaking, "I" and "mine" it would express,
Yet in the concept "we" and "ours" I knew.
"Justice and Mercy"—started its address—
"Make me exalted to this glorious state
Which is of all desires quite in excess.

On earth I left my memory, so great
That even evil-minded folks must praise
My story, e'en if spurning its dictate."
Thus out of many coals a single blaze
Is felt, as there that image did resume
Manifold loves in singly spoken phrase.
I then went on: "O ye, perpetual bloom
Of joy eternal, from whose number vast
I feel the charm of but one sole perfume,
Let now your breath free me from that hard fast
Which for so long has kept me hungry, in vain,
Since earth, for it, can offer no repast.
I know that if in other blest domain
The Highest Justice makes its mirror clear
The sight of it for you no veils restrain;
Ye know how ready I make myself to hear
With all intent—by you is understood
The doubt which gnaws at me these many a year."
As falcon issues forth, free from his hood,
And moves his head, beats with his wings the air,
And preens himself and shows his eager mood,
I saw thus move that sign, whose features were
By praises of the grace divine composed,
'Mid songs known only to those joicing there.
IT spoke: "The one who compassed th' uttermost
Bounds of the world and did in it unroll
So much that's hidden, and so much disclosed,
Could not so deeply imprint into the Whole
His power that his Word would not remain
Quite in excess of the created scroll.

CANTO XIX

And the first Prideful One makes this quite plain
For he, the highest creature, loath to wait
For greater splendor, suffered his just bane.

It is then clear that all lesser estate
Is but scant vessel for that endless good
Itself to self a measure adequate.

Hence our mind-vision must be understood
As only a ray from that high mind outflung
Of which all things created are imbued;

And, of its nature, cannot be so strong
To fail to know that past all visible—
Much farther—is the source whence it has sprung.

Eternal justice' depth doth then repel
The sight of which your world has been endowed
As eye is baffled by the ocean well:

To reach its bottom is man's sight allowed
Close by the shore; but far in the marine
'Tis there, but depth makes unto it a shroud.

There is no light but comes from the serene
Never perturbed, or 'tis a darkening haze,
A shadow or venom of the stuff terrene.

And now that thicket stands oped to thy gaze
In which the living justice hid, wherefore
Such eager questions thou wert wont to raise,

Saying: "A man is born upon the shore
Of Indus; there to speak of Christ no one
Has come—none writes or reads the saving lore.

And—far as human wit has power to con—
All his desires and all his acts were good
And sin, in life and sermon, he did shun.

Unlaved he dies, and not with faith indued;
Where is the justice that should damn this man?
If he lacks faith, what fault in him is shewed?"
And who art thou who from the bench wouldst scan
Man's life and judge a thousand miles away
With vision even shorter than a span?
If with such subtlety one should survey
My works, were not o'er you the Holy Writ,
Certes of many doubts would one fall prey.
O earthly animals, O clouded wit!
First Will, source of true good—essentially—
Never diverged from self, good infinite;
That much is just which doth with IT agree;
Cannot draw IT to self a good create
Which comes in being through Its radiancy."
As when a stork doth 'round the nest rotate
After he has the hungry birdlets fed
And to him looks the one already sate,
Thus then became (and thus I raised my head)
That image blest which urged by the combined
Counsels of many moved on its wings spread.
It wheeled and sang: "Alike, as thou must find
My song which past thy understanding soars,
Is heaven's judgment past the mortal mind."
The lights in which the Holy Spirit pours
Its flame, then stopped: still in that sign they stood
Which made the world revere the Roman force.
It then began again: "None ever could
Rise to this realm who had not faith in Christ
Before or since they nailed Him to the rood.

106 But see, quite many cry "O Christ, O Christ"
Who shall at Judgment have less close their stands
To Him, than some who have not known of Christ.
109 Aethiops shall condemn such Christians
When the two Colleges shall part for aye
One to the poor, one to the wealthy manse.
112 What shall the Persians to your rulers say
When on that opened volume they shall read
The pages which their shameful deeds display?
115 'Mid Albert's works there shall be seen the deed
Which soon shall move th' Angelic pen to write
When the kingdom of Prague to death shall bleed.
118 There also shall be seen what sorry plight
Was on the Seine brought by the counterfeit
Coin that he stampéd whom the boar did smite.
121 The thirsty pride—that volume shall repeat—
Which Scot and English fills with folly so
That neither can remain within his mete.
124 A lustful idler him of Spain 'twill show,
And him who wears Bohemia's diadem
Who virtue never knew nor willed to know.
127 And of the cripple of Jerusalem
'Twill show the goodness with "I" only spelled
While shall the contrary require an "M".
130 'Twill show what avarice, what baseness held
The heart of him who rules the Isle of fire
Where came at last to end Anchises' eld.
133 And to describe how small he is and vile
He shall be written down in shortened hand
Which much in narrow spacing can compile.

What filthy deeds—all then shall understand—
His brother and his uncle wrought, who placed
On their high birth and crowns so foul a brand.
And he of Norway shall be justly appraised
And he of Portugal, and Rascia's king
Who by Venetian coins has been disgraced.
Blest Hungary, if to misgoverning
She puts an end and blest Navarra, too,
If she were arméd of her mountain ring.
As an earnest of this let all hold true
That Nicosia and Famagosta, tried
By their own beast, do now lament and rue:
The beast that leaveth not the others' side."

Line 2—Of the Eagle.
10, etc.— The Eagle speaks in the first person but for all the Just.
16-18—Speaking of the Roman Empire and of the precepts of justice established by it.
25-27—Fasting, as the Poet lacked the food of knowledge. His difficulties are expressed below (70, etc.).
28—In your heaven, the revelation of God is surely as clear as in others.
38—By spirit-lights.
40, etc.—God who designed the Universe and poured into it so much that is known and so much that is hidden to creatures, could not stamp it so well with his power that his Word (or concept) would not remain, etc.
46-48—Lucifer, with his fall, makes clear that even the highest creatures, if they do not wait for the light of Grace, cannot see all that is contained by the Universe.
50—The "endless good": God.
55-57—Our mind-vision cannot be so powerful—of its own nature—not to be obliged to realize that its source is much above all things visible to it.
63—The bottom is there but shrouded by its very depth.

CANTO XIX

64—No light—to see the depth of divine justice—comes except from the serenity of Heaven; any other human light is hazy: shadowed by the imperfections of the flesh or envenomed (distorted) by its passions.

76—Unbaptized.

82—"My works": the works of the justice of God.

83—If you had not the Scriptures to direct you.

86-87—"First will", God's will, never diverged from its essential goodness.

89—The will of God cannot be prevailed upon by any created good (any creature is good in itself): that same created good exists through the radiancy of God's will.

110—The wicked and the saved, at the Last Judgment.

115-117—Albert of Hapsburg, Emperor from 1298 to 1308 A. D. (see Purg. VI., 97). The Recording Angel will soon write down his bloody invasion of Bohemia.

118-120—Philip the Handsome gave fictitious value to French coins: died in an accident at a hunt (1314).

121-123—Refers to the wars between the English and the Scotch king.

124—Ferdinand of Castille.

125—Wenceslaus. (See Purg. VII., 101).

127—Charles II of Anjou, "the Cripple", who also bore the title of King of Jerusalem.

128—Roman numbers; h. e. 'one' and 'one thousand'.

131-132—Frederick II. of Aragon, King of Sicily (the Isle of fire because of the Aetna): Anchises, father of Aeneas, died in Sicily.

137—James, king of Majorca, and James II of Aragon.

138—They sided with Pope Boniface VIII in his claim over Sicily.

139—Probably a Hakon, who urged some injust wars.

140—Dionysius, King of Portugal from 1279 to 1325. Accused of having been quite greedy.

140—Urosius II of Ragusa (Rascia) in Dalmatia who counterfeited the coins of Venice.

142—A stricture, in general, upon the Kings of Hungary.

143—If Navarra could be protected from French invasions by its ring of mountains (the Pyrenees).

146—Cities on the island of Cyprus governed by a Henry II, a cowardly and lustful King who (148) stands close to the other Kings, h. e. is of the same base kind.

CANTO XX

ARGUMENT

Still in the sixth heaven. The Eagle indicates the Spirit-lights which form its eye visible to the Poet and explains how two of them, known to the world as pagans, were saved.

When he by whom the world is all illumed
So from our hemisphere away descends
That light of day is everywhere consumed,
The sky which brightened through his effluence
Alone, shows suddenly all o'er its blue
Numberless lights in which but one resplends.
This heav'nly scene in my remembrance drew
When in its blesséd throat, the world's own sign—
And of its leaders' symbol—silent grew;
For all those lights which did so lively shine,
Shining yet more, such songs gave forth in choir
That slip and fade away from memory's shrine.
Sweet Love, thou clothéd in such smiling fire,
How seemed'st, within those flamelets, palpitant
As thou didst them to holy thoughts inspire.

And when those jewels dear and rutilant
Engemming the sixth splendor with their gleam
Ended in silence their Angelic chant,
I heard, methought, the murmur of a stream
Which limpid ripples down a ledged stair
Showing how rich its summit-spring doth teem;
And, as in cithern the neck's strait is where
The sound takes form, and as into the bore
Of a bag-pipe resounds the breathéd air,
Thus, all delay dismissed in waiting for
Else, through the neck, as if through cavity,
The murmur of the eagle up did soar.
It waxed to voice therein, and came to me
Out of its beak in words such as my heart
Expected, where I wrote them eagerly.
"Where mortal eagles have their sight"—such start
It made—"which of the sun is not afraid,
Now look in me and fix that very part;
For, of the fires whence is my figure made,
Those in my head whereof the eye is dight
Are those supreme over each other grade.
He who, like pupil, holds the center light
Sang poems which from Holy Spirit flowed:
He was who moved the Ark from site to site.
And now to him his songs' deserts are showed
—As far as his own counsel was their spring—
For the reward which is of equal mode.
Then of those five who form the eyelid's ring
He closest to my beak, the widow's plea
For her son, answered with just comforting.

CANTO XX

He now well knows what price it costs, to be
Astray from Christ, for his experience
Of this dear life and of its contrary.

He following in that circumference
Whereof I speak, along the upper bow,
Stayed very death for worthy penitence.

Eternal judgment—now he comes to know—
Is not transmuted if a worthy prayer
Makes of "to-day" "to-morrow" on earth below.

With me and with the laws, the next one there
Became a Greek, for the great Shepherd's sake—
With good intent which sorry fruits did bear.

Well now he knows that ills borne in the wake
Of his good deed, for him no hurt have meant,
Althought that deed the world's destruction spake.

The one thou see'st where down the arc is bent
On earth was William whom those lands bemoan
Which Frederick and Charles alive lament.

He now well knows how is a righteous throne
Beloved by Heaven; in the fulgid rays
That come from him, that even now is shown.

Who would, down in the world that errant strays
Believe the Trojan Ripheus in this round
Among the holy splendors has fifth place?

The secrets of God's favor which astound
The world unseeing—now he can well see
E'en though he cannot fathom that profound."

Like lark who spins his airy tracery
Warbling at first, then ceasing from his lays
As sated by his last sweet melody;

Thus seemed to me that image which displays
The seal of God's high will, to whose desire
All the created things their being trace.

And though my wonder did through me transpire
As coat of color through a glass, in peace
No longer could I wait, but to enquire

My lips were eager:—"Pray, what things are these?"—
By weight of wonder forth my words were pressed,
Whereon I saw those festive glows increase.

After, with brighter eye, that image blest
Gave answer to my query, to allay
The wondering suspense within my breast.

—"I see thou dost believe the things I say
—Not seeing yet their "how"—since I so tell;
Hence, if believed, they still are hid away.

Thou art as one who apprehends quite well
A thing by name, but only when explained
By others, finds its essence visible.

Regnum coelorum is by force obtained,
Force of warm love, of hope's bright eagerness
By which a victory o'er God's will is gained.

Not as a man may other man oppress:
One conquers It because It wills to lose
And vanquished, with its goodness vanquishes.

My brow's first life, and so the fifth, induce
Thy mind to wonder, since herein dost see
The realm of Angels brightened by their hues.

They did not leave their body (as known to thee)
Gentiles, but Christians; firmly they believed
In the feet nailed already, or yet to be.

CANTO XX

[100] One out of Hell, where sin is ne'er retrieved
By will for good, came to his bones again;
'Twas the reward by lively hope achieved,

[103] By lively hope which strove with all its main
And for his resurrection God it prayed
So that his will could an impulse attain.

112 The glorious soul whereof I speak, when made
Fleshbound anew (though for a time but fleet)
Believed in Him who then could grant His aid;

115 And was his faith inflamed to such a heat
Of love sincere, that—his new life fulfilled—
Place in this sport he had, as his just meet.

118 The other, through the grace which is distilled
From such deep spring that no created sight
Could ever reach where its first wave is spilled,

121 Put all his love on earth in living right,
Whence God was pleased to shed on him, from grace
To grace, of Christ to come the saving light.

124 In that believing, through his after days,
No more the stench of paganism he bore
For that reproaching the perverted race.

127 And those three ladies thou hast seen before
The cart's right wheel, to him as baptism stood—
Ere baptism known, a thousand years and o'er.

130 Predestination! how thy roots elude
(Being so hid) the compass of those eyes
By which the whole First Cause remains unviewed.

133 And ye, O mortals, keep of your surmise
Narrow the scope, for we who see God's face
Know not all those elect to Paradise.

But e'en this lack as a sweet boon we praise:
Because is by this joy enhanced our weal
That our desires conform to all God's ways."—
And thus that image which is God's own seal
To clear my sight and its vain flounderings
Suave balm gave me which did my blindness heal.
And as good lutist with the twang of strings
Close follows a good singer's melody
So that yet more of joy the singing brings,
Thus, while It spoke, I hold in memory
That I did see both lights of heaven's love
Just as in blinking human eyes agree,
According with the words their flamelets move.

Line 1—The Sun.
6—The stars, supposedly receiving their light from the Sun.
8—The Eagle.
11—As the single voice of the Eagle ceased to speak, each of the spirit-lights began singing.
13—God's love.
31—The eye of the Eagle. One eye is visible, the Eagle being seen in profile.
34-36—The spirit-lights whereof the eye of the Eagle is formed are of higher degree than all others.
37—David.
44—Emperor Trajan. (See Purg. X., 76, etc.).
47—Trajan, according to Medieval legend, had been liberated from Hell.
49-52—Ezechiel, David's son, who prayed to have his death delayed so he could make worthy penitence. He is one of the eyelid's lights.
52-54—There is no change in the eternal judgment if an event is postponed on earth on account of prayer.

CANTO XX

55-57—Emperor Constantine with the Roman Empire ("me", the Eagle) and its laws became a Greek (brought the seat of the Empire to Constantinople) to leave Rome to the Pope.

58—He is not harmed by the fact that his deed (leaving Rome to the Pope) has borne ill fruits.

61—The arc of the Eagle's eyelid.

62—William "the Good", son of Robert Guiscard, King of Apulia and Sicily, the former now ruled by Charles of Anjou (see Par. XIX, 127), the latter by Frederick of Aragon (see Par. XIX., 131).

68—Called by Virgil "most just".

94—"The Kingdom of heaven"—the original Latin reproduces the famous phrase in the Vulgate.

98—The will of God is conquered because it desires to be conquered.

100—The first was that of Trajan; the fifth, of Ripheus.

105—In the future, or in the already happened Passion of Christ.

106, etc.—The legend had it that Pope Gregory the Great had obtained by prayers the resurrection—and liberation from Hell—of Emperor Trajan.

111—"His will": Trajan's.

117—The "sport" of heaven. "Sport" translates the Italian "gioco".

127—Faith, Hope and Charity. (See Purg. XXIX., 121, etc.).

145—While the Eagle spoke.

146—Of Trajan and of Ripheus.

147—Both eyes flickered at the same time.

CANTO XXIII

CANTO XXI

ARGUMENT

The Poet is raised to the seventh Heaven, of Saturn. He has a vision of a golden ladder down whose rungs spirit-lights come to meet him. The spirit of Peter Damian speaks to the Poet.

Upon my lady's face I now held fixedly
My eyes, again, and thither, too, was turned
My spirit, from all other purpose free.
She did not smile, and soon the why I learned:
"If I did smile"—she said—"thou wouldst compare
To Semele when she to ashes burned;
Because my beauty which with every stair
Of this Eternal Hall grows more intense
The higher we climb—as thou wert made aware—
Unless is tempered, to such point resplends
That 'neath its glow thy feeble mortal power,
Would be naught else but twig which lightning rends.
The seventh splendor we have reached in our
Ascent; which 'neath the burning Lion's breast,
Mixed with its strength, on earth its rays doth shower.

After thine eyes keep now thy mind addressed
Making them mirrors to the semblance fair
Which in this mirror shall be manifest."

If one but knew how I was feasting there
(Of the blest face admiring every trait)
When my intent I turned to other care,

Would know that to whate'er she pleased dictate
My heavenly escort found me quite content,
Making one side the other's counterweight.

Within the crystal which, in circle bent
Around the earth bears the dear leader's name
Under whose rule was every malice spent,

Colored like gold with sparkling beams aflame
I saw a ladder which so high projected
Upwards, to reach beyond my vision's aim.

So many splendors o'er the rungs, directed
Downward I saw, that every light which looms
Throughout the heavens, there I thought collected.

And as the rooks amidst the morning brumes
Together massed (as they from nature learn)
Go flapping 'round to warm their frigid plumes;

Then some will swing away, without return,
Some whence they came turn back their pinions fleet,
Some wheel about but leave not their sojourn:

Such varied manner here seemed to repeat
The masséd sparkling of the approaching glows,
When 'gainst a certain rung they came to beat.

The light which stopped and was to us most close
So lucid waxed that—in my thought—I spake:
"Well I can see the love which in thee shows."

But she from whom the how and when I take
Of speech and silence, moveless stands; 'tis well
I keep from asking and my wish forsake.

Then she to whom my silence visible
Was in the sight of the All-seeing One
"Release thy ardent wish"—was prompt to tell.

—"While my deserts"—thus were my words begun—
"Make not me worthy of a reply from thee;
For her who has allowed this orison,

O blesséd life, within thy ecstacy
Hidden—for her I beg that thou reveal
The cause which made thee come so close to me.

And tell why do not sound, within this wheel,
The heart-sweet symphonies of Paradise
Which through the others so devoutly peal."

—"Thy hearing mortal is, and so thy eyes"—
It answered me—"Hence stops our song, and so
To thee Beatrice e'en her smile denies.

Adown this holy ladder I thus low
Have climbed and for this only: to bid thee
Welcome, with words and with my mantling glow;

Nor prompter I through greater charity;
Equal and higher love above doth blaze
As by the sparkling thou canst clearly see.

But that High Love which makes us promptly embrace
What the world-ruling Counsel may ordain,
Assigns, as thou may'st notice here, our place."

—"O holy lamp"—said I—"I see this plain:
To follow Providence eterne, your will
Free-loving, is enough in this demesne.

But to my sight I find this irksome still:
That is, why wert predestined thou alone
Amidst thy peers, this office to fulfill."—
Not yet from me the final word had flown
When making center of its middle, wheeled
The lamp around, like a mill's speeding stone.
Then answered me the love within concealed:
—"Divine illumination on me pours
Through the radiations which my body built
And joining with my vision its own force
Lifts me so far above my self, I see
The Highest Essence where it has its source.
Hence comes the sparkling of this joy in me,
For with the grade of clearness of my sight
I equalize my flaming clarity.
But of the heaven's spirits the most bright,
The Seraph looking closest with his eyes
In God, thy query could not answer quite.
For, what thou ask'st so deeply hidden lies
Of the Eternal Statute in the abyss
That all created vision it defies.
And to the mortal world tell thou of this
(At thy returning) so that men desist
From moving toward such goal their feet, amiss.
With light is wreathed here the mind; with mist
Of smoke, on earth; how could it do below
What it cannot, to heaven's glory uprist?"
As with its words prescribed the spirit so,
I put aside what I had wishéd for
Humbly desiring but its name to know.

—"Twixt Italy's fair shores a ridge doth soar
(Not distant from the place thou call'st thy own)
So that e'en thunders are resounding lower,
And makes a hump which is as Catria known:
Beneath, a hermitage stands consecrated
And wont to be disposed to prayer alone."—
Thus his third speech to me was initiated,
And then continuing, he added:—"There
So in God's service firm I grew that sated
With olives' juices on a simple fare
I lived and asked from heats or frosts no shield,
And contemplative thoughts were all my care.
That cloister to these heavens used to yield
Richly, but now it gives a harvest wan
So that quite soon it must needs stand revealed.
I in that place was Peter Damian
And I was Peter Sinner in the shrine
Our Lady holds on th'sea of Adrian.
And when my life grew near to its confine
On me, unseeking, was the hat imposed
Which goes from bad into e'en worse decline.
Cephas and he whom chose the Holy Ghost
Its mighty vase, came lean, unshod: both sate
Gladly at the table of a humble host;
But on each side must needs have men-in-wait
The modern shepherds; some to lift their train
(They are so heavy) and some to lead in state;
Over their palfreys are their mantles lain
So that two beasts go forth beneath one hide:
O patience that doth all this sustain!"—

136 At this, I noticed many splendors glide
A-down the rungs and turn wheel-like; their glare
Seemed with each of their turns intensified.
139 Round this they came and motionless stood there,
And gave a cry of such a sound intense
That it could not to aught on earth compare.
142 I kenned it not; the thunder whelmed my sense.

Line 6—When Jove appeared—as she had asked—in all his godly splendor.
13—The planet and heaven of Saturn in which appear the contemplative souls.
14-15—At the fictitious time of Dante's journey, April 1300, Saturn was in conjunction with the constellation of the Lion.
18—The heaven is called "mirror" because the Spirit-lights are reflected there from the Empyrean, their abode.
24—The pleasure of obeying Beatrice balancing the lost pleasure of looking at her.
26—Saturn had been King during the Golden Age.
46-49—Beatrice, who saw in God the words unspoken by Dante.
67—I came first, not because my charity is greater.
74—The will, though free to love, cannot but follow, in Heaven, the providence of God.
78—The office of welcomer.
84—The body of light.
87—Where the divine illumination has its source.
90—The charity (love) of the spirit-lights is equal to the splendor of their vision.
94—The mystery of Grace: or why certain spirits are privileged.
98—Cease from trying to fathom the mystery of Grace.
106-108—The ridge of the Appennine, not far from Florence, soars so high, etc.

CANTO XXI

109—A peak in Umbria.

110—Holy Cross Abbey.

115—A simple fare seasoned with olive oil.

121, etc.—In Holy Cross Abbey he was known as Peter Damian (988-1072). Before that he had been a brother in the Convent of Our Lady at Ravenna, famous city on the Adriatic sea (the sea of Adrian) calling himself Peter the Sinner. Became a great Churchman, Bishop and Cardinal.

125—The Cardinal's hat.

128—And Paul.

135—Patience of God!

139—The light of Peter Damian.

140—Of indignation for the state of the Church.

CANTO XXII

ARGUMENT

Still in the Seventh heaven. The spirit of Saint Benedict speaks to the Poet. Ascent to the eighth heaven. Advised by Beatrice the Poet gazes back on the way so far covered: tiny Earth appears in the distance.

Oppressed with wonderment, unto my Guide
I turned, like infant whose appeal is made
There, always, where he knows he may confide,
And she, like mother quick her son to aid
—Noting his panting heart and pallid brow—
With words whence his distress is e'er allayed,
Spoke: "Dost not know thou art in heaven now;
That holy is all in heaven, and that naught
Here happens but what may good zeal allow?
What change in thee the singing would have brought
And my own smile, must thou be now aware
Since such effect in thee that cry has wrought:
In which—couldst thou have understood their prayer—
Thou wouldst already heaven's vengeance know;
But till thou witness it, death shall thee spare.

The sword of heaven is not quick nor slow
In cutting down, except in the surmise
Of him who waits, in fear or hope, its blows.
But towards others now direct thy eyes
And quite illustrious spirits thou shall face
Turning thy sight about, as I advise."
As she had counseled, back I brought my gaze
And many scores I saw of little spheres
Which shone yet fairer for their mutual rays.
I stood as one who turns on him the spear's
Point of his wish, and follows not his bent
For asking, since to ask too much he fears.
And then the largest and most luculent
Among the spheres came forward from the rest
That I in its revealing be content.
In it I heard: "If it were manifest
To thee, e'en as to me, the burning ray
Of love in us, thy thoughts would be expressed.
But lest thy waiting further should delay
Thy loftly goal, thy wish I shall fulfill
E'en to the thought to which thy lips dost stay.
The mount whereon Cassino stands mid-hill
Once saw the people to its summit climb
Who were deceived and moved by sinful will.
I am who thereto carried the first time
The name of Him who to the world has brought
Truth which lifts us to such a height sublime.
And grace in me such wondrous splendor wrought
That the surrounding vales I could transmute
From the false cult by which were men distraught.

46 These other fires were men whose life-pursuit
Was contemplation: kindled them that heat
That brings of holiness the flower and fruit.
49 Here Romualdus' and Macarius' seat;
Here are my brethren who in cloistered close,
With persevering heart, have kept their feet."
52 And I to him: "The love which plainly shows
In this thy speech, the kindly countenance
I see and note in each of all your glows,
55 Do so in me my confidence enhance
As rose that opens fully 'neath the rays
Of the sunlight, in all of its puissance.
58 I pray thee, father, and of such a grace
Assure to me the gain: out of the shrine
Of covering light, grant me to see thy face."
61 "Brother"—said he—"this high desire of thine
Up in the last of spheres will find its food;
All other yearnings there are filled, and mine.
64 There ripens each desire to plenitude
Perfect; and only in that sphere of the Whole
Every part stands where it always stood;
67 For it is not in space and has no pole—
And all the way to that our ladder spans
And hence it goes beyond thy vision's goal.
70 Jacob the patriarch was granted once
To see its topmost part that far extend
As laden it appeared with Angels' bands.
73 But none will lift a foot, now, to ascend
The holy ladder, so the rule I made
Only to spoil the page below is penned.

The walls that were for use of abbey laid
Are now but dens of robbers—and are heaped
The cowls of monks with naught but flour decayed.
But from hard usury no gain is reaped
Against God's will so much as is the gain
For which monks' hearts are in such madness steeped.
For all on which the Church may have domain
Toward those who ask for God is truly a debt:
To kin or even worse doth not pertain.
So is by weakness mortal flesh beset,
Good start 'tis not enough on earth to hold
Young oaks alive till acorns they beget.
Peter began—and silver lacked and gold;
Through orisons and fasts I sought for light,
And Francis humbly his first flock enrolled.
If the first rise of each thou viewest right,
Then look'st how far it now has gone adrift,
Thou shalt see that to dark has turned the white.
But Jordan's stream turned backward, and the rift
Midway of fleeing waves—as God decreed—
Were greater sights than here the coming shift."
Thus having spoken, quickly he did recede
Within his band—now closely serriéd,
They all rushed upwards with a whirlwind's speed.
I hastened after them those stairs to tread,
Moved only by my Lady's beckoning—
So was my nature by her powers led.
Nor here below where nature gives the spring
To climbing up or down, a motion fleet
Was ever known as gave me then my wing.

CANTO XXII

Reader, may I my journey again complete
To that high triumph, wherefore oft I taste
Tears for my sins and oft my breast I beat,
Into the fire no quicker would be placed
And drawn, thy finger as I saw the sign
After the Taurus and in it was raised.
O glorious stars, you who so pregnant shine
With mighty power, to whom, I own, 'tis due—
Whatever it may be—this art of mine,
His rise with you, his setting had with you
The Father of all mortal life when I
The Tuscan air with my first breathing drew.
And when I was endowed with grace so high
To reach the wheel by which your course is spun
I had in lot your region of the sky.
Toward you now sighs, with humble orison,
My soul which needs acquire new power to face
This passage perilous which draws it on.
—"So near thou art to last salvation's grace"—
Began Beatrice her address to me—
"Thou must possess a clear and piercing gaze.
Hence ere thou reachest deeper unity
With it, look down and all the world survey
Which 'neath thy feet already I caused to be;
So that thy heart as happy as it may,
Meet now the triumph of the hosts of heaven
That joyful come o'er this ethereal way."
Backwards I turned my sight on all the seven
Spheres and this globe was offered to my eye
So paltry that to smiling I was driven.

And I approve as better that advice
Which holds it worth the least: to point elsewhere
One's thought, I deem to be most truly wise.
I saw Latona's daughter and her glare
Held not the shadow which I did believe
To be brought on by matter dense or rare.
And thy son's aspect fully I did perceive,
Hyperion; I saw how close their ring
Dione and Maia 'round his brightness weave.
And then appeared to me Jove's tempering
Twixt son and father, and 'twas clearly shown
How to their various places they must swing.
And of their mass and of their circling mode
All seven gave to me clear evidence
And why each one must hold its far abode.
The tiny plot which stirs such violence
In us, while turning with the Twins eterne
I fully saw from hills to river ends;
Then to the beauteous eyes my eyes did turn.

Line 14— God's punishment on the wrongdoers in the Church is imminent.
33—Thou would'st not fear to express thy thoughts.
36—Including the thought which thou speakest not.
37-39—Montecassino, south of Rome, remained till the sixth century a place of pagan worship. The castle of Cassino (whence the name) stood on its flank.
40—Saint Benedict (480-543) founder of the great Benedictine Order.
46—In the heaven of Saturn appear the spirits of the contemplative monks.

CANTO XXII

49—Saint Romualdus (born 956) founder of the monks called after his first monastery of Camaldoli (Vallombrosa) near Florence. Saint Macarius (IV century) whose rule was followed by many of the Eastern monks.

65-66—In that sphere of the Whole, the Empyrean, whose parts never move.

67—It is beyond space and does not turn upon poles as the other nine spheres.

68—The golden ladder spoken of in the preceding Canto.

70-72—Jacob saw (Genesis XXVIII.) a ladder reaching from earth to heaven and crowded with Angels.

74—The ladder is a figure of contemplation or spiritual ascent to heaven. Saint Benedict complains that even the followers of his rule neglect contemplation.

80—That is, the ample enjoyment of the fruits of Church possession.

88—Peter the Apostle.

90—Saint Francis.

94-96—The Jordan's waves were stopped in their flow to let Joshua pass. The opening of the Red Sea before the Jews led by Moses. Such wonders were not so great as the manner in which God will presently remedy the conditions of Church and State.

100—The Poet climbed the golden ladder.

110-111—The constellation which follows after the Taurus is that of Gemini.

112-117—The Sun was in Gemini, when Dante was born. That constellation was supposed to have great influence.

119—The eighth heaven, of the Fixed Stars.

123—The difficult passage of the Poem which the Poet is about to deal with.

127—Before thou achievest a deeper unification with that "last salvation" or the vision of Divinity which begins now, look back, etc.

134—The earth.

139—Diana, the moon. See Par. II, 58 etc.

143—Hyperion, the Sun's father.

144—Venus (daughter of Dione) and Mercury (son of Maia) circling near the brightness of the Sun.

145-147—The planet of Jove tempering (by standing between) the ardor of Mars and the coldness of Saturn (Mars was Saturn's son). It was also shown how their movement shifts them around.

149—All seven planets.

151—The earth.

152—With the Gemini.

154—To Beatrice's eyes.

CANTO XXIII

ARGUMENT

In the eighth heaven. Innumerable spirit-lights appear to the Poet, and above them the light of Christ. The whole court of Heaven is now before the Poet; in reflection, because its proper abode is the Empyrean. The Virgin Mary and the Angel Gabriel. St. Peter.

As bird who clings, amidst the lovéd fronds,
To his dear birdlets' nest, all through the night
Beneath whose cloak each worldly thing absconds,
And on the aspects loved to feast his sight,
And find the food their hunger to allay
(Wherefore the hardest labors seem but light)
Forestalls the time upon an open spray
And yearning for the sun strives to detect
With fixéd gaze the first break of the day;
In such a manner stood my Lady erect
And gazed upon that part—with aspect tense—
Where of the sun the course seems to be checked.
And I who saw her longing and suspense
Became as one whose wish for else is keen
And finds in hope alone a soothing sense.

Yet little passed, this and that time between,
When I desired, I mean, and then gazed on
A heaven filled with greater, greater sheen.

Beatrice spoke: "Behold the cohorts won
By Christ; herein is gathered all the grain
Harvested by these spheres since they have spun."

I saw her aspect a new flame obtain
And seemed her eyes so filled with joyous light
That I pass on since here my art is vain.

As in the clear serene of moonlit night
Trivia smiles among the nymphs eterne
Whose brilliance makes all heaven's quarters bright,

O'er myriads of lamps I did discern
A sun from whom those other lamps all glowed
As from our own all lights of heaven burn;

And through the living light transparent showed
The luminous substance with such splendor clear
So that my sight must bend beneath the load.

O Beatrice, my sweet guide and dear!
Soon came her warning: "No defense withstands
The mighty power that overwhelms thee here.

In it the wisdom is and the puissance
Which between earth and heaven oped the ways
As was desired for such long time's expanse."

As fire that loosened from a cloud's embrace
(Dilated so that there 'tis not restrained)
Against its nature makes a downward trace:

E'en so my mind which a new strength had gained
Amidst those foods, out of itself arose—
And it cannot recall the height attained.

46 "Open thy eyes; on what I am, look close;
Things thou hast seen whence power have thy eyes
To bear the smile which in my visage glows."

49 I was like one in whom the flashes rise
Of a forgotten vision, and its spell
Vainly to bring again to mind he tries,

52 When on my ears her urgent offer fell,
Worthy of such thanks, that naught will that delete
Out of the pages which the past retell.

55 If now, in sounding, all those tongues would meet
By Polyhymnia and her sisters fed
And made the richer by their milk so sweet,

58 A thousandth part of truth could not be said
Singing the holy smile and what a sheen
From it was on the holy aspect shed.

61 Thus limning Paradise with tongue terrene
Must leap the sacred strain across a break
As one who finds his path cut by ravine.

64 But he who thinks what ponderous theme I take
And mortal shoulders must that burden bear
Will not give blame if 'neath such weight I quake.

67 It is not journey that small bark may dare
That which now cleaving goes my fearless prow
Nor for a pilot who himself would spare.

70 "Why of my face art so enamored thou
That of a glance dost not that garden deign
Which with fair flowers the rays of Christ endow?

73 The Rose is here wherein the flesh mundane
The Word Divine endued; the lilies, too
After whose scent the path of truth was ta'en."

Thus spoke Beatrice and I, prompt to do,
—With all my heart—her bidding, to the war
Of my weak eyelids, gave myself anew.

As under a sunbeam which clear doth pour
Through rift of clouds, a shining flowerbed
My eyes, 'neath shadow held, had seen before,

Thus struck by ardent rays from upwards shed
Numberless glows I saw which there did shine,
But could not see the fulgor's fountain head.

O Thou who seal'st them so, Virtue benign,
Higher didst rise to grant scope to my sight
That needed strength which then not yet was mine.

The name of the fair flower which morn and night
I always call, made my whole soul adhere
To contemplation of the greatest light.

After on both my eyes were printed clear
Quantity and quality of that live star
Which conquers there above as it did here,

A flame came through the heaven, similar
To crown as it was shaped like flaming ring
And girded it with motion circular.

Whatever melody may sweetest sing
On earth, and more attract the enraptured mind
Would be like riven cloud a-thundering

Beside the notes which from that lyre unwind
By which was crowned the beautiful sapphire
In that most clear of heavens there enshrined.

—"Angelic love I am and happy I gyre
'Round that high joy, breath of the bosom fair
In which on earth found hostel our Desire.

106 And I shall gyre, while thou shalt follow where
Thy son abides, and make—Heaven's fair Dame—
Brighter the highest sphere by entering there."
109 In such a manner then the circling flame
Sealed its address; to it each heavenly blaze
Answered by loudly singing Mary's name.
112 The regal mantle which doth all embrace
The folds of earth and doth most fervid burn
Instinct with God's own breath and with His ways,
115 Had above us its boundaries interne
At distance so remote, its inner guise
From where I was I could not yet discern.
118 Therefore no faculty possessed my eyes
To follow with the crownéd splendor blest
Which in its offspring's wake I saw uprise.
121 And as an infant toward its mother's breast
Will stretch its arms—after its nourishment—
(Its yearning in an outward glow expressed)
124 Each of those splendors upward was distent
With its flame's point, and thus to me they made
Their endless love for Mary evident.
127 Then they, still there before my face arrayed
REGINA COELI sang in voice so sweet
That never such delight from me will fade.
130 Oh how with a rich harvest are replete
Those bounteous coffers which on earth once were
Under the sower's hand a ground so feat.
133 There live and there enjoy their treasure's share
Who earned it while exiled in Babylon
By shedding tears and giving gold no care.

There bides in triumph—under the high Son
Of God and Mary—for his victory—
(With him the old and the new garrison)
The one who of that glory holds the key.

Line 12—Beatrice looked toward the meridian; in that position the sun seems to move slower (to man's eye).

16-18—Little was the interval between the time when the Poet formed his desire (of seeing what Beatrice seemed to expect) and the time when he saw the heaven filled, etc.

26—Trivia, or Diana: the moon, smiling among the stars.

29—Christ.

30—As from our sun the stars visible to man.

32—The substance of the Word of God—or possibly the humanity of Christ.

37—The wisdom and puissance of Christ.

40-42—As lightning (supposedly a fire which swells out of a cloud's involucre) descends; against the nature of fire which usually tends upwards.

43-45—The poet was, as it were, taken out of himself. The "foods" mean the spiritual joys which so expanded the poet's mind.

46, etc.—Beatrice speaks. The vision of Christ's triumph enables Dante to look at Beatrice's smile. He had no such power before (see Par. XXI, 5, etc.).

50—A dream-vision. That is, of the smile of Beatrice as seen on earth.

55-57—All the combined voices of the poets, fed and enriched by the milk of Polybymnia and her sisters (the Muses), could not, etc.

59—Beatrice.

73—The Virgin Mary.

74—The Apostles.

78—Of my weak eyelids against the brilliant light.

86—The splendor of Christ, not yet sustainable by the Poet's sight, had risen higher than the other lights.

88—The name of "Mary", presumably uttered by the spirit-lights made the Poet turn to the greatest light left at the lower level.

CANTO XXIII

94-96—Around the light of Mary, another light came to circle it as a crown. The Archangel Gabriel.

100—Beside the song of the Angel.

101—The Angel crowned the light of Mary.

104-105—Around the joy (the light) breathed from the bosom of Mary, terrestrial hostel of Christ (our Desire).

106-108—I shall continue to circle while thou, Mary, shall rise after thy Son and shall make the highest sphere (the Empyrean) brighter, etc.

112-115—The Ninth Heaven or Primum Mobile is like a mantle around the other "folds of the earth" (the other eight heavens) and is influenced more than the rest by the very breath of God and the ways of His will.

115-117—The borderline between the Eighth heaven (where Dante was) and the Ninth was so far above that the Poet could not see the "inner guise" (the internal nature) of said Ninth Heaven.

119—Could not follow, the ascent of Mary after her Son.

127—"Hail Queen of Heaven"—a prayer of the Church.

131—The spirit-lights are the "bounteous coffers".

135—Exiled on earth.

136-139—There triumphs for his victory—under Christ and having with him the Saints of the Old and the New Testament—Saint Peter.

CANTO XXIV

ARGUMENT

In the eighth heaven. The Apostle Peter examines Dante concerning Faith: its definition, its proofs, its source.

"O company elected to the feast
Of the blest Lamb's great supper, whence is fed
Your hunger so that always 'tis appeased,
If, by the grace of God, this man some shred
Is now foretasting from your banquet-board—
Though death his time not yet has warranted—
Mind ye his yearning and on him be poured
Some of your dew; ye drink out of the same
Fountain which doth the thoughts of his afford."
Beatrice thus; those happy souls became
Such as on fixéd pivot turning spheres
While they gave forth a comet-radiant flame.
As each clock wheel unto the next adheres
And turns so that, to one therein intent,
The first stands still, the last flight-fast appears,

E'en so those carols' dance was different,
And from their motion, either fast or slow,
I had their varied richness evident.

But from the ring which did most beauteous show
Came forth a light, and this so brightly burned
That there it left none else of clearer glow.

Around Beatrice for three times it turned,
Singing a song of such divine delight
My fancy has perforce its bliss unlearned;

Here leaps my pen and this I do not write,
Because to paint such folds, our phantasy
(More so our speech) is color much too bright.

"O holy sister, thy warm charity
Thus by thy prayer so devout expressed
Out of my beauteous sphere has loosened me."

After it had stood still, that splendor blest
Towards my Lady breathed, and to her
Such words as I have noted, it addressed.

And she: "Eternal light of that seigneur
Into whose hand our Lord the keys once gave
(By Him brought down) of this pure joy we share,

Ask him, at thy own pleasure, upon grave
Or simple matters of the faith which made
Thy feet to walk upon the threat'ning wave.

His love and hope and faith do not evade
(In all their worth) the knowledge thou dost gain
By looking there where are all things portrayed;

Yet citizens are entering this reign
For the true faith; 'tis well for him therefore
To speak of it, that glory it may obtain."

CANTO XXIV

As, silent, arms himself a bachelor,
And hears the Master the moot-point declare
(He shall then solve it, when 'tis reasoned o'er),

Thus, while she spoke, all arms did I prepare
Of reason, making ready for the test
Of such profession and such questioner.

"Speak forth, good Christian, make thee manifest:
Faith, what is it?"—Wherefore I raised my head
Unto the light whence thus I was addressed;

Then turning to Beatrice, in her I read
A ready advice that I should not repress
The flow in my heart's fountain gatheréd.

"The grace which now concedes that I confess
To the high captain"—I began to say—
"May grant that well my concepts I express."

And I went on: "As truthfully convey
The writings, father, of thy brother dear
Who turned, with thee, Rome to the right pathway:

Of things hoped for, Faith is the substance sheer,
And argument of things that from us hide;
Such doth to me its quiddity appear."

And he: "Quite well thou hast to this replied
If well discernest why it is defined
As substance, and as argument beside."

And I: "To things of such mysterious kind
Which here to me conspicuous became
The eyes on earth below perforce are blind;

Their being, there, naught but belief may claim,
And as, on that, the lofty hope is based
It takes of substance, properly, the name.

Since we lack other sight and must be traced
Our syllogisms from what we thus believe,
Faith with the arguments is rightly placed."
Thereon I heard: "If all that men achieve
As doctrine's fruits, so well were understood
Sophists would find no room their snares to weave."
So breathed that great love with flame indued;
Then from it issued: "Both alloy and weight
That make this coin have been assayed as good;
But if thou hast it in thy purse, now state."
And I: "I have it, shining so and round;
Naught in its coinage makes me dubitate."
Then issued forth, out of the light profound
That sparkled there: "This jewel dear, the true
Base of all virtues whereof man is crowned,
Whence came to thee?"—And I: "The bounteous dew
Sent by the Holy Ghost which stands diffuse
Upon the parchments old and on the new,
Is syllogism from which a proof ensues
So shaped acutely, that in its respect
All demonstrations seem to me obtuse."
Again I heard: "Thy judgment is correct,
Drawn from the premises, both new and old;
But why must they as God's own word be reck't?"
And I: "Proof of this truth to me unfold
The works that followed, since could Nature ne'er
Such iron heat or on her anvil mold."
It was replied: "And who doth witness bear,
Those works took place? Nothing except the same
Which wants to prove itself to them doth swear."

106 I said: "And if Christianity overcame
The world without such works, this wondrous thing
A hundred times of truth is better claim.
109 For thou didst enter, poor and hungering,
Into the field to plant the goodly tree
Which was a vine, but now but thorns that sting."
112 This ended, through the heavens joyously
Sang the high, holy court: "To God give praise"—
And only there is heard such melody.
115 And now that Baron, with his probing phrase
From limb to higher limb had drawn me on
So that we now approached the topmost sprays.
118 He then resumed: "The grace whose wooing won
Thy mind, was that which caused thy lips to move
Up to this point, and rightly was it done
121 So that what issued forth I fain approve;
But now to state what thy beliefs assume
And whence first offered—this doth thee behoove."
124 "O holy father, spirit blest, to whom
Is visive what so didst believe, to best
E'en younger feet in racing to the tomb,"—
127 I spoke—"Thou wishest me to manifest
In its full form my ready-accepted faith
And for the cause of it thou didst request.
130 I believe in one God—my answer saith—
Sole and eterne, who, while unmoved remains,
Moves all with his desire and his love's breath.
133 And this my credence not alone sustains
Physics and Metaphysics; it is showed
Also in the truth which from the heavens rains

Through Moses, through the Seers, through sacred ode,
Through Gospel words, and through the words ye writ
When ye became the ardent Ghost's abode.

I believe in three persons infinite
In but one essence joined, so one and trine
That SUNT and EST at once it doth permit.

Of the deep manner of the Life Divine
On which I touch, with frequent evidence
The Gospel word prints in my mind the sign.

This is the source, and the first spark came thence
Which into lively flame has then increased
And like a star in heav'n, in me resplends."

As lord who listens to what makes him pleased
And, happy at the good tidings, to his breast
His liege embraces, soon as he has ceased,

Thus with a gladsome song that called me blest—
When I had ended—'round me circled thrice
That apostolic light at whose behest

I had discoursed: so pleased him my replies.

Line 8—Some of the grace and knowledge which is in you.
9—God: the fountain of everything.
16—The original Italian word "carole" indicated a certain form of dance.
19—The Spirit-lights are arranged in ring-shaped groups.
26-27—"Such folds", or such nuances, such delicate shading which are beyond the bright color of human words.
34—Of Peter.
46—Listening to the posing of the question—as in the Schools.
48—The Master will finally resolve the question.
51—Of the profession of faith before Saint Peter.
62—Of Saint Paul.

CANTO XXIV

64—From Saint Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews XI, 1.

66—"Quiddity" a scholastic term meaning "essence".

73—The "being" or essence of the mysterious things in heaven cannot be affirmed except upon "belief" or faith. Since on that faith the hope (of salvation and of divine vision) is based, faith itself is a "substance" as it underlies the "lofty hope".

84—The coin of faith.

93—The Old and the New Testament.

99—How is proved the inspiration of the New and the Old Testament?

101-102—The miracles as a proof of truth—Nature alone could not heat or mold such iron: h. e. the miracles were supernatural works.

103-105—Objection: the Scripture, whose divinity is to be proved by the miracles, is the same that attests the miracles.

106-108—If the world was converted without miracles, this in itself would be a miracle a hundred times greater.

109—"Thou", Peter.

111—The Church.

115-116—Step by step, the highest reaches of the argument had been attained.

122—What are the points of thy faith.

123—How faith came to thee.

125-126—Who seest now what thou didst hold with such ardent faith that when advised of the Resurrection, thou wert faster than the younger Saint John in entering the tomb of Christ (as the Gospel tells).

136—Through the writings of Moses, the Prophets, the Psalms.

137—"Ye": the Apostles.

141—"Sunt" and "est": "are" and "is".

CANTO XXV

ARGUMENT

In the Eighth Heaven. The Apostle Saint James questions Dante on the Virtue of Hope. Toward the end, the Apostle Saint John comes forward.

If e'er it happens that the sacred strain
To which have earth and heaven put their hand
And which for years has caused my flesh to wane,
Shall break the malice which for me has banned
The fair fold where I slept a lamb, to all
The wolves a foe, that war upon the land,
With other voice, with other fleece, I shall
Return a Poet, at the font whereon
I was baptized, for my crown to call.
For there the faith for which the souls are known
To God I entered: then, for it the flame
Of Peter thrice around my forehead shone.
Then moved towards us a light out of the same
Ring whence had issued the first fruit 'mid those
Christ left on earth to bear his Vicar's name,

And while my Lady did new joy disclose
She said: "The Baron see, in honor of
Whose shrine the pilgrim to Galicia goes."
In such a way we see on earth a dove
Approach and take his place close by his mate,
Circling and cooing to display his love,
Thus I beheld each of those Princes great
And glorious give a mutual welcome there,
Praising the food that doth all hunger sate.
After their greetings' end, the noble pair
Motionless CORAM ME in silence stood
Nor could my vision their resplendence bear.
Then spoke Beatrice in smiling attitude:
"O glorious life through whom the largess flowing
Down from our Temple, in men's words was shewed,
Let Hope sound at this height: 'tis plain thy knowing
Of it, since always thou its figure art
When on the three more light was Christ bestowing."
—"Lift up thy head and be of gallant heart;
To what from mortal world up here is sent
The final ripeness must our rays impart."
To me the second fire this comfort lent;
Wherefore my eyes unto the hills I raised
Whose 'whelming weight had kept them downward bent.
—"Since from our Emperor thou hast been graced
That in the halls most secret of his manse
Thou meet his friends—before of death thou taste;
That, having seen this Court's true ordinance,
The hope which rightly is pursued below
In thee and others thou may'st then enhance,

Say what it is; how bright its blossoms grow
Within thy mind, and what caused them to spring."
Thus further spoke to me the second glow.

She, ever merciful, who helped my wing
To beat its pinions on such lofty flight,
Forestalled in such a way my answering:

"No other son possessing hope as bright
Has the Church Militant: so bears it writ
The Sun which on our army sheds its light.

Hence out of Aegypt, Heaven doth permit
His coming to Jerusalem to see,
Ere from his soldiering he is acquit.

Those other points on which thy scrutiny
Aims not to knowledge, but that he relate
How much this virtue is still pleasing thee,

I leave to him; too heavy is not their weight
Nor breed they pride—let him reply thereto
And may God's grace his mind illuminate."

As scholar after master follows through,
Willing and prompt—in what he did well learn—
So that his worth he may unveiléd shew:

"Certain expectancy of glory eterne
To come"—said I—"is Hope, which heaven's grace
Produces and precedent merits earn.

From many stars this light shines in my face,
But first my heart held it by him distilled
Who sang the highest Leader's noblest praise.

In this high Theody "Their hope let build
On Thee all those who know thy name" he said;
And who does not, if with my faith he's filled?

Thy distillation then again was shed
On me by thine Epistle, and thy dew
From my full store, on others, too, was spread."
A flickering flash, all during my reply
Showed in the living bosom of that glare,
Frequent and quick as lightning in our sky.
He breathed then: "The love in me a-flare
Yet for that virtue which, till I was crowned
And left the battlefield, with me was e'er,
Again moves me toward thee in whom abound
Hope's graces, and therefore I shall rejoice
If what it promises thou wilt expound."
And I: "The old and the new Scriptures voice
What it its goal."—"Now point it out"—he said.
—"The souls which as His friends have been God's choice
Reaching their land—in Isaias 'tis read—
Each in a double garment shall be drest:
Their land is the sweet life here meritéd;
Thy brother then in clearer words expressed
—Where of the candid vestments he has penned—
Has made this revelation manifest."
And first—when of my words I reached the end—
SPERENT—a voice was heard above—IN TE;
With which the carols' answering cry did blend;
After, a light 'mid them grew to such ray
That if had Cancer such a glistening
Crystal, a winter's month would be one day.
As, rising, goes to join the dancers' ring
A merry maid, to honor the new bride—
Not from a fault that might the conscience sting—

Such-like I saw that splendor clarified
Come to the two (wheel-like they turned around
And their warm love was measure of their stride)
And join with them in motion and in sound:
Meanwhile my Lady on them kept fixed her glance
Even as bride whose step and voice are bound.
"This is the one who on our Pelican's
Bosom reposed, to whom was left of yore
Down from the cross the great inheritance."
Thus spoke my Lady, and all the while no more
—After her words—her vision she declined
From her fixed aim, than she had done before.
As one who peers and thinks in his own mind
That now he sees the sun eclipséd wane
(Striving to see and growing partly blind):
Toward that last fire I looked with such-like strain,
When this was said: "Why so by light distressed
To see such thing not found in this domain?
On earth my body is earth, and with the rest
Such will remain, until our number be
Equal to that from will eterne assessed.
With the two stoles in this blest sanctuary
Are only the two splendors hence uprist:
This to your world shall be brought down by thee."
At this, the flaming wheel I saw desist
From turning, and with it the dulcet blend—
Made by the triple spirit's song—was missed:
As when to ease the labor or to fend
Some danger, all the oars that fell and rose,
At sound of whistle, motionless distend.

Alas! how stirred in me new sorrow's throes
When to look at my Lady around I whirled
And I could not see her, though there so close
To her I was, and in the happy world!

Line 5—Florence.

7—"Other fleece"—not "a lamb" but a man of experience and authority.

9—The crown of Poet: the laurel wreath.

11—"For it", for the faith by Dante professed.

13-15—The spirit-lights had formed a number of rings; one of them was formed by the Apostles and out of it had come Peter, "first fruits" among the Vicars of Christ: first Pope.

17—Saint James: a great Sanctuary dedicated to him was and is in Galicia (Spain): San Jago de Compostella.

23—Peter and James.

24—Praising God.

26—"Coram me": before me. The original Latin phrase indicates solemnity: it was a court-ritual expression.

29-30—In the Epistle of Saint James reference is made to the largess of Heaven (our Temple) in pouring grace and knowledge.

31—In this heaven.

32-33—St. James must know about Hope, since he is the figure of it whenever Christ gave special revelations to the three favorite Apostles: Peter (Faith), John (Charity), James (Hope).

38—Scriptural figure applied here to the Apostles.

44—The only hope well founded.

54—As it is written in God.

58—"What is hope?" was the first point. Beatrice has answered the second. The third is "whence came thy hope?"

59-60—The Apostle inquires not because he lacks knowledge, but so Dante may relate on earth how much, etc.

72—David, whose Psalms contain the praises of God (the highest Leader).

73—Psalm IX, II.

CANTO XXV

77—The Epistle of Saint James.

91—What Isaias says (LXI, 7) "they shall receive double in their land" is interpreted of the Heavenly Beatitude as consisting of the happiness of the soul and the glorification of the body.

94-96—St. John, brother of St. James, in the Apocalypse (VII, 13) speaking of those "clothed in white robes" clarifies that meaning.

98—"Let them hope in thee"—from the Psalm quoted above (73). The three Apostles sang first, echoed by the other spirit-lights.

100—See below 112.

101-102—In December, the Constellation of Cancer shines at night; if it had a star so bright (such a glistening crystal) December nights would be like day and that month would be one long day.

105— Not from vanity or any sinful purpose.

111—Through shyness.

112—This is the light of St. John to whom Christ from the cross confided his mother.

122, etc.—Reference to a legend claiming that St. John had been taken up to Heaven in the body.

127—See above (91): the enlightened soul and the glorified body.

128—Christ and Mary whose lights had risen above the Eighth Heaven, as told in Cantos XXIII. and XXIV.

130—The wheel formed by the spirit-lights of the three Apostles.

CANTO XXVI

ARGUMENT

In the eighth heaven. At the request of the Apostle John, Dante dwells on the virtue of Charity: how it is logically directed toward God and how it came to him. Ended his profession of Faith, Hope and Charity, Dante is granted a view of the spirit-light of Adam.

While I stood fearful for my sight so spent,
From the bright splendor causing it to wane
A breath came forth and made me newly intent,
Saying: " 'Tis well, while waxes strong again
Thy vision which my rays thus now reduce,
That some reward in speech thou should'st obtain.
Do then begin and say what goal pursues
Thy soul; on this let be thy mind at rest:
Thy sight not lost but only impaired its use,
Because the Woman who across this blest
Region leads thee, can with her glance bestow
The grace that Ananias's hand possessed."
I said: "Let at her will, come quick or slow
The balm unto these eyes which were the doors
She entered with a fire of ceaseless glow.

16 The Good which on this court such gladness pours
Is Alfa and Omega of every script
Which softly or loudly holds—of Love—discourse."
19 The very voice by which from me was stripped
The fear that from the sudden dazzle grew,
To reason further on, my yearning whipped.
22 It said: "This matter thou must filter through
A finer sieve; as it is meet for thee,
Tell who thy bow to such a target drew."
25 And I: "Through reasons of philosophy
And through authority descending thence
Must be imprinted such a love in me.
28 For, as the Good (as such) one apprehends,
This Love is kindled, and 'tis more or less
Just as the goodness which therein resplends.
31 Hence toward that essence (where is such excess
That "goods" outside of it, wherever found,
Are rays that from its splendor luminesce)
34 More than toward others, e'er to turn is bound
The mind, when loving, of all who discern
The truth which of this proof is solid ground.
37 This verity quite plainly expressed I learn
From him who the first place of Love has shewed
Among the substances of life eterne:
40 From the true Author this I understood
Who spoke to Moses—and the words referred
To Him: "Thou shalt behold all that is good."
43 This also I learn from thy own blazing word
Which cries the things up here in mystery deck't
Louder than any voice on earth e'er heard."

CANTO XXVI

Now this was said: "Through human intellect
And through concurrent high authorities
Godward thy highest love thou dost direct:
But tell if other bonds besides all these
Draw thee to Him: let it be plainly spelled
How many teeth of love thy being seize."
The holy purpose by Christ's eagle held
Was not obscure; indeed I saw quite plain
Whither such my profession was impelled.
"The biting grapples which the heart constrain
Toward God, have all concurred"—thus I anew
Began—" to rouse my love and to sustain.
The world's existence and my being, too;
The death which to give life to me, He bore;
What every faithful hopes—e'en as I do;
The living knowledge which my mind doth store,
Of wrongful love out of the troubled spumes
Drew me, and of true love placed on the shore.
And in so much I love each bough whence blooms
The garden of the Eternal Gardener,
As much as each of them His love illumes."
When I had ceased, a song of sweetness rare
Rang through the heaven; "Holy" in triple hail
With all the blesséd sang my Lady fair.
As when keen splendor doth our sleep assail
(The visive spirit rushing toward its source
Against the rays which pierce through every veil)
And he who wakes the object seen abhors
(His sudden start has left him witless quite
Until perception helps, in proper course),

Thus from my eyes put every mote in flight
Beatrice, with the splendor of her own
Which many miles away would have been bright:
And hence I felt my sight much keener grown
Than e'er before; I asked, by wonder stirred,
Of a fourth splendor which 'mid us, now shone.
"There wooes his Maker"—from Beatrice I heard—
"The soul most ancient: him those rays surround
To whom the Primal Power, first, life conferred."
As branch whose top is flected to the ground
When struck by passing wind: soon to be raised
Again by inner strength, in quick rebound;
I acted in like manner, deeply amazed,
The while she spoke; then steady made my heart
A wish to speak which in me quickly blazed.
"O fruit alone created ripe"—such start
I made—"O ancient sire who to each bride
By nature and in law a father art,
I pray with all humility and confide
That thou wilt speak to me; my wish thou know'st—
To hear thee sooner, speech I leave aside."
As strives beneath a pall on him imposed
An animal, and by the wrap which stirs
Along with him, his yearning is disclosed:
Likewise the soul of whom we are all heirs
Showed him quite ready, through his coverture
To yield to me and hold with me converse.
He breathed then: "Although thou keep'st obscure
Thy wish, it is revealed to me quite clear
More than such things of which thou art most sure:

I see it in that mirror wholly sheer
In whom all things find their full self portrayed
While His full self in them cannot appear.

Thou seek'st to know the time since I was made
By God in that high garden where thy Guide
Disposed thee so to climb such lengthy grade;

How long my eyes its pleasure satisfied,
And the true cause which the great scorn brought on,
And for my use what speech I did provide.

'Twas not the tasting of the tree, my son,
That caused, itself, the sorry banishment,
But only that the mark was over-run.

There, whence was Virgil by the Lady sent,
Four thousand and three hundred more, and two
Sun-gyres, in yearning for this court I spent.

Nine hundred thirty times the sun anew
Passed all the stars upon his road diffused
The while on earth the mortal life I knew.

Wholly forgotten was the tongue I used
Ere to the work that could not come to end
Nimrod and all his people were induced.

For reason-born effects which must depend
Upon man's whim which is oft-times renewed
With heaven's turns, could not its passing fend.

Nature gives you for speech an aptitude
But thus or thus, nature doth fain permit
To you to do your will, as may seem good.

Before I reached the sorrows of Hell's pit
The good supreme was called by mortals EL
Whence comes the joy in which enwrapped I sit.

ELI it was then called—and this is well
For like the leaves your mortal customs run:
New ones there sprouting whence the old ones fell.
Held me that Mountain most excelse upon
The waves—before I lost my virtues' dower—
From the first hour to that which—when the Sun
Moves to new quadrant—follows the sixth hour."

Line 2—The spirit-light of Saint John.

12—Ananias restored the sight lost by Paul at the time of his vision on the Damascus road.

14-15—Through Dante's eyes Beatrice had entered his heart.

17—Not only Holy Scripture, but any writing.

28-30—The apprehension of anything considered as good arouses love for it, in proportion to the goodness of such thing.

31-36—The loving mind must necessarily turn to God (the "essence" of goodness) more than to other objects, once it is realized that love follows in proportion to the excellence of the "good" apprehended.

38-39—Plato speaks of love as being supreme among the eternal substances admitted by his philosophy.

40-42—The "true Author" is God who speaking to Moses (Ex. XXXIII, 19) said: "I will shew thee all good"—intending that of Himself.

43—The Gospel of Saint John.

52—Saint John is symbolized by the eagle.

71—The faculty of sight (visive spirit) moves toward the source of the light whose rays penetrate the membranes of the eye.

77—Of her own eyes.

83—Adam.

106—The mirror: God.

110—In the Terrestrial Paradise.

113—The scorn, a sentence of exile from T. P.

CANTO XXVI

117—The mark set by God: "Thou shalt not eat of that tree."

118—In the Limbo.

121—That is, 930 years.

124—Babel's tower.

129—The passing of the original Adamic tongue.

139—On the T. P.—at the summit of the Mountain of Purgatory.

140, etc.—Adam remained in the T. P. from the first hour of the day to that which follows the sixth hour—that is, to the seventh hour—when the Sun moves to new quadrant: the Sun's circular course is divided in four quadrants of six hours each—at the sixth hour of the day (noon) the Sun moves to a new quadrant. Adam then would have remained in the T. P. till 1 p. m.

CANTO XXVII

ARGUMENT

In the eighth heaven. The spirit-light of Peter and with it all the others change their color to express disdain for the conditions of mankind. Bitter invective of the Apostle. Ascent to the Ninth Heaven. Reassuring prophecy by Beatrice.

"Glory to Father, Son and Holy Ghost!"
So sweet began that chant all Paradise
That to all else my raptured mind was closed.
And in my sight, meseemed, a smile did rise
From all creation whence a 'whelming spell
Was entering through my ears and through my eyes.
O joy! O happiness ineffable!
O life entirely filled with love and peace!
O scatheproof riches that all yearnings quell!
Before my eyes those four star-brilliancies
Stood burning: of the one first evident
The splendor even more began increase,
And such deep change its semblance underwent
As Jove would show, if he and Mars both were
Like birds and changed their plumed habiliment.

The Providence whose will apportions there
Office and turn, had caused the blesséd choir
To pause in utter silence everywhere.
I heard: "If a new color shows my fire
Wonder thou not; see how my words shall raise
New color upon all in this Empire.
The one who down on earth usurps my place,
My place, my very place, which void remains
Of God's Eternal Son before the face,
Has made my burial ground a sewer that drains
The world's blood and the stench; the Evil One
Who fell from here, there now much comfort gains."
With such a hue as, set against the sun
A cloud at morn or evening is arrayed,
I saw the heaven then all overrun.
As of herself remains secure a maid
Of honest mind, and yet the utterance
Of others' faults may render her afraid—
Thus Beatrice changed her countenance:
And Heav'n by such eclipse was darken'd o'er,
Methinks, when suffered the Supreme Puissance.
Again from him disdainful words did pour,
And was his voice so from itself diverse,
Indeed his aspect had not changéd more:
"Mine, Linus' blood, and Cletus' did not nurse
The Spouse of Christ, that others' greediness
Might then use her for filling up their purse;
But for the gaining of this happiness
Sixtus, Calistus, Pius, Urban were
Such willing martyrs, after long distress.

46 It was not meant by us that those who bear
Our staff should strive to keep the Christian fold
Part to the right, part leftward of their chair;
49 Nor that the keys once given me to hold
Should e'er be marked upon a flag, in camp—
Against baptizéd folks—to be unrolled;
52 Nor that as figure sealed I serve to stamp
The privileges sold or filled with lies:
Whence reddens oft and flashes forth my lamp.
55 Ravenous wolves concealed in shepherds' guise
Are seen from here to roam all fields about:
Why dost delay so long, O God's reprise?
58 Gascons and Cahorsines now get their snout
Ready to drink our blood: O, how doth fade
Our fair beginning, into sorry rout!
61 But that high Wisdom which, with Scipio, made
For Rome the glory of the world secure
Will soon, as I foresee, bring forth its aid.
64 Thou, son, whose mortal burden must endure
The world again, my words there freely quote:
What I unmask, let not thy mind immure."—
67 As do the flakes of frozen vapors float
Down in our air, the season when is horned
The sun by the adjoining heaven's goat:
70 Upward I saw the ether thus adorned
And filléd with the flaked triumphal glows
Which there with us had for a while sojourned.
73 Pursuing their appearances, up rose
My sight, till blocked its piercing further on
The space which, overmuch, did interpose.

My Lady, seeing then the ties undone
Which upward bound my gaze, spoke forth: "Now bend
Thy sight and see how far thy turn has gone"—

Since first I happed a downward glance to send
I saw myself o'er all that arc conveyed
Of the first clime from middle to the end;

So that Ulysses's pass in his mad raid
I saw past Cadix; on this side, the shore
Where a sweet burden was Europa made.

And I could have discovered even more
Of this small plot, but for the sun's advance—
Beneath my feet—one Sign beyond and o'er.

My loving mind which wooes the countenance
—Always—of my fair Lady, sought meanwhile,
As ne'er before, to turn to her my glance.

If art or nature, eager to beguile
Men's eyes and then their mind, fair traits have wrought
In human flesh or coloréd profile:

All those assembled would appear as naught
Beside the joy divine I there beheld
When 'gainst her smiling face my sight was brought.

And 'neath her glance, in me such virtue welled
That I—from Leda's beauteous nest made free—
Into the fastest heaven was impelled.

Its lofty parts—where teems life's energy—
So uniform appear, I must forbear
To tell which place Beatrice chose for me.

But she, of all my yearnings quite aware
Began—while smiling with such happiness
That in her aspect seemed God's joy to flare—:

"The power of motion, for which doth quiesce
The center, and the rest all turns around,
Here has its source, from here exerts its stress.
And to this heaven naught else forms a bound
But God's own mind, from which to this inhere
The power it sheds, the love by which 'tis wound.
Of light and love rings it a circle sheer
(As are the others by this circumfused)
Alone its circler governing that sphere.
Gauged by no other motion, this is used
To gauge all others; just as "ten" we say
From its "one-half" and its "one-fifth" produced.
And how the roots of Time, in such a clay
Are set, should now be manifest to thee—
And how the others but its leaves display.
O greediness, how deep beneath thy sea
Thou draggest men, so that no one has power
To lift above thy waves his vision free!
Indeed in men the righteous will may flower,
But by the rain unceasing then is drowned
The bloom, and the sweet plums shrivel and sour.
The grace of faith and innocence is found
In children only, but it flies off fast
Even before the time their cheeks are downed.
Someone, a babbler yet, may keep the fast,
Who will devour, soon as his tongue is loose,
Minding no season, any rich repast;
Someone, a babbler yet, obeys and shews
Love to his mother, who would feel delight
Burying her, when words he well construes.

Thus changes into black the skin that white
Had its first aspect, of the beauteous child
Of him who brings the morn and leaves the night.
Think—lest by wonder be thy mind beguiled—
That no earth-ruler the true justice deals
And men still further stray through pathways wild.
But ere away from winter wholly steals
Janus' month (for the fraction left unreck'd
Below) will thunder these supernal wheels
And then the storm which ye did long expect
Shall come and turn the poops where are the prows
So that the fleet shall have a course direct;
And a good fruit shall bear the budding boughs."

Line 10—The three Apostles and Adam.
11—Saint Peter had first revealed himself.
14—If Jove, of silvery color, should take the red color of Mars.
22—The Pope now holding Peter's seat.
26—Lucifer.
28—Red, for shame and wrath.
34—No longer smiling but frowning.
36—At the Crucifixion.
37—From Peter.
38—Not kindly as before, but wrathful.
40—Martyred Pope, immediate successors to Peter.
44—Other saintly Popes.
48—That is, treat differently.
52—The figure of Peter used as a seal on papal documents.
58—Pope Clement V, a Gascon, and John XXII of Cahors were to follow shortly on the seat of Peter to drink the blood of the martyrs who had founded the Church.
61-62—Scipio Africanus by defeating Hannibal and destroying Carthage had preserved Rome from ruin.
66—Keep not walled in within thy mind.

CANTO XXVII

67—Snow-flakes.

68-69—In the winter solstice the sun is in Capricorn. This constellation takes its name from the Goat. The lines mean (figuratively): when the sun is touched by the horn of the Goat.

70-72—All the spirit-lights moving upwards seemed like an inverted snow fall.

73—Pursuing the up-ward floating spirit-lights.

78—The turning of the Poet with the eighth heaven.

79-81—At his reaching the eighth heaven, Dante had looked down for the first time. (Par. XXII., 133 etc.). According to the Ptolemaic system the earth surface was divided in seven "climes" or zones. The first clime (torrid zone) was the closest to the Equator and had as its center (meridian) Jerusalem, and Cadix (Spain) as its most westerly point. Thus the poet had moved—in respect to the earth—over the arc from Jerusalem to Cadix.

82-84—West of Cadix the Poet could see the Straits of Gibraltar (through which had passed Ulysses—(See Inf. XXVI, 96, etc.) and east of Cadix the Phoenician shore (Eastern Mediterranean) whence Jove in the shape of a bull had carried away the maid Europa.

85-87—He could have seen more of the earth, but the sun had gone forward beneath the feet of the Poet, therefore the rest of the earth was dark. A 'sign' (of the Zodiac) means a Constellation.

95—"There": in the face of Beatrice.

98—The Gemini (Twins) the sign under which Dante had entered the eighth heaven were the fabled children of Leda.

99—The ninth heaven or Primum Mobile or Crystalline Heaven.

100-102—There is no variation in the color of this ninth heaven from whose motion all life depends. In such milieu the Poet cannot indicate a definite place.

106-108—Circular motion, involving a fixed center and a moving of all other parts, usually originates from the center. But in the universe, motion begins at the periphery.

109—The Ninth Heaven is not localized because only the Divine Mind is outside of it.

112-113—As other heavens are circled by this ninth one, thus the ninth heaven is embraced by the Empyrean—a ring of light and love: the Empyrean is immaterial, outside of time and space.

114—"Its circler": the Divine Mind which forms a ring of light and love (the Empyrean) around the ninth heaven is the only power that governs that same Empyrean. Other heavens are ruled over by Angelic Intelligences.

115-117—The motion of the ninth heaven (Crystalline, Primum Mobile) is not measured by that of the other heavens; on the contrary the others' motion is measured by it, as the number 10 is generated by 2 (its half) and 5 (its fifth).

118-120—The roots of Time (the idea of Time originating from the idea of motion) are set in this ninth heaven, the source of motion. Other heavens display only the "leaves" of Time.

124-126—The rain (symbol of passions and all harmful influences) causes the fruits of men's righteous will to shrivel and sour.

130-131—A child will keep the fast-days (that is, observe the discipline of the Church) who will—soon as he is grown up—disregard all restrictions.

136-138—Men change as doth Nature (the child of the Sun who bring morning, etc.) change its white skin (its lighted morning aspect) to black (at night).

140—This happens because mankind has no true rulers.

142, etc.—A fraction of time unconsidered in Julian calendar was slowly changing the proper position of the seasons. January would have been in the course of time out of winter becoming a Spring month (This led to the Gregorian revision of the calendar). Such a contingency was however in the far away future. The passage simply means: "before long".

145—"The storm": that social upheaval often envisioned in the Poem: the establishment of the Empire.

146—The prows were toward the shore: turning the ships about so they will be ready to sail will place the poops toward the shore.

148—See line 126. The fruits will not shrivel, then.

CANTO XXVIII

ARGUMENT

In the ninth heaven: vision of God as a point of light surrounded by nine fiery circles. The circles are the nine orders of Angelic Intelligences.

After she had unfolded in such guise
The truth—against the mortals' present blight—
The One who fills my mind with Paradise;
As in a mirror sees the candle's light
A man behind whose back the flame doth shine
(Ere in his thoughts it is, much less in sight)
And turns to look if by the mirrored sign
The truth is told, and finds it to agree
With that, as note with mark on measured line;
E'en so I did, as well my memory
Recalls, while gazing in those eyes so fair
Whereof Love's cord was made to capture me.
And, as I turned, my eyes became aware
Of all that in that volume is displayed
Whene'er to scan its circuit one gives care.

A point I saw from which a splendor rayed
Of such acuteness that the kindled eyes
Only by closing may that fire evade;
The star which hence appears of smallest size
Would seem a moon, if by that point 'twere placed,
As star beside a star upon our skies.
Perhaps so close as halo shows enlaced
Unto the star wherefrom its colors spring
When on the thickest vapors it is traced—
Circled around the Point a fiery ring
With such fast motion that it would have won
O'er that which girds the world with swiftest wing:
And this was circled by another one:
This by a third, 'round which a fourth ring sped:
A fifth then came, 'round which a sixth was spun.
Followed thereon a seventh, and its spread
Already was such that Juno's messenger
To hold it, were too narrow-limited.
The eighth then and the ninth; and ev'ry layer
Had slower motion as it did include
A number which from one was distanter.
The sheerest brilliance had the ring which stood
Less than the rest removed from that pure spark—
Methinks, because most with its truth imbued.
My Lady noticed me in wonder stark:
—"Heaven depends"—then from her lips I heard—
"And so all nature, from that spaceless mark.
Look at the ring that closest doth engird
The point: and know it moves the speediest
Due to the fire of love by which 'tis spurred."

CANTO XXVIII

And I to her: "Were in the world expressed
An order such as in those wheels I gaze,
What here I see would set me quite at rest.

But in the world o'er which our sense surveys
We see the vaults become the more divine
As from the center they hold farther place;

Hence, if must vanish all desire of mine
In this angelic temple wonder-fraught
Which light and love alone has for confine,

I must yet hear why of one mode are not
The copy and its pattern: since thereon
I, by myself, have vainly engaged my thought."

—"If by thy fingers cannot be undone
This knot, such thing no wonder should compel
Since it has stiffened, being tried by none."

Thus spoke my Lady, and then: "What I shall tell,
Take—if thou wishest to be satisfied—
And upon it thy subtle mind let dwell.

The circles corporal are narrow or wide
According as the virtue is more or less,
Which doth in them—spread o'er all parts—abide:

More goodness seeks to shed more blessedness;
More blessedness in larger body is found
(When parts all perfect in it coalesce):

The circle then with which is carried 'round
The mighty Whole, accords in manner clear
With that where love and knowledge most abound.

Hence, with thy measure girding not the mere
Form, but the virtue of those substances
Which in a rounded shape to thee appear,

Thou shalt well see the wondrous symmetries
(Smaller with less and greater fits with more)
So that each heaven with its Mind agrees."
As North-Wind doth to clear serene restore
Our hemisphere of air whene'er he blows
Out of the cheek whence comes his breath less hoar:
All grossness he dissolves and overthrows
That clouded it; and smile then in the sky
The beauties of all parts in its enclose—
Thus happed to me when with her clear reply
My Lady to my doubtings did attend:
Like star in heaven, truth shone to my eye.
And after—when her words had reached their end—
Like molten iron sparkles, in such guise
I saw the circles sparkle and resplend:
The sparks moved with the fire whence they did rise—
The doubling of chess squares (so many were they)
Not to such wondrous figures multiplies.
"Hosanna!"—from each choir I heard this lay
To the fixed point which holds them to that "there"
Which held always, and shall hold them for aye.
And she who sees the dubious thoughts that e'er
Rise in my mind, then said: "The smaller rings
Seraphs and Cherubs did to thee declare.
So swift they move, drawn by their fastenings,
To be alike the Point—with all their power:
From their sublimity their power springs.
These other loves which the fixed point embower
The Thrones are of God's aspect: calléd so
Since the first triad they complete: their dower

Of happiness—as I want thee to know—
Is high, as deep their visions penetrate
The truth in which all minds contented grow.
Hence the foundation of the blest estate
Is on the act of sight (we now well see)
Not on love's act, which must the former wait.
The measure of the vision is the fee
Earnéd by grace and will disposed a-right:
Thus we proceed from higher to lower degree.
That other Triad blooming forth so bright
In this unfolding of eternal spring
Which is not withered by the Ram of night,
Lifts its "Hosanna" eternal, in which sing
Three melodies that voice the wondrous bliss
Of the three orders in that triple ring.
And in this rank are these three Deities:
First, Dominations; Virtues then are found,
And of the Powers the third order is.
See the two rings, next to the final, wound:
Principates and Archangels those engem:
The last, of Angels' joys is all compound.
While upwards points and aims each diadem,
Downward is felt their power; they all aspire
Godward—so drawn, they draw all else with them.
Strove Dionysius with such great desire
To contemplate these Orders, that he placed
And named (as I myself have done) each choir.
Another method Gregory embraced:
His smile upon himself that error drew
Soon as this heaven with clear eyes he gazed.

136 And if a mortal to the world did shew
Such secret truth, wonder not thou therefore,
For he, who saw it here, revealed the true
139 Mode of these gyres to him: this and much more."

Line 3—Beatrice.

6—Before he thinks of, or sees, the actual candle.

7—"The mirrored sign": the reflected image.

8-9—Finds the reflected image to agree with truth (reality) as a musical note sung or played in accordance with its place marked on the measured line (on the paper where written).

10, etc.—Beatrice's eyes were the mirror in which the Poet saw reflected all contained in that "volume": in that heaven (the ninth).

16—This "point" is God, visible for the first time here in the ninth heaven; to be better revealed in the Empyrean.

20—So small is the point.

24—The thicker the vapors on which the halo is traced, the closer it appears to the mother-star.

27—Even faster than the ninth heaven, or Primum Mobile.

32—Iris, or the rainbow; the seventh ring around the Point was already of larger size than the rainbow appears to us.

34-36—Each ring was bigger as its numeral was farther from "first". These are the nine Angelic choirs, of which more below.

42—The "Point", God, is the spaceless mark.

46, etc.—In the Dantean universe, the circling heavens move faster as they are farther from the earth-center; which is contrary to the "mode" of the Angelic spheres in respect to their center, the "point", God.

59-60—The knot (this cosmological difficulty) has become harder for lack of minds enquiring about it.

64—The nine heavens have a size corresponding to the virtue in them.

67-69—More goodness—or more virtue—tends to produce more salutary effects (h. e. more blessedness) which are necessarily to be contained in a larger body—if the parts of such body are equally perfect. (A body having no greater virtue or goodness might conceivably be larger if imperfect parts were in its mass).

CANTO XXVIII

70-72—The ninth heaven—which carries in its circle the Universe—is the counterpart of that first ring around the "Point": both of them countain the greatest love and knowledge.

73—Consider the inner virtue, not the form (size) of heavens and of rings.

78—Each heaven corresponds with the Angelic Mind ruling it—in respect to inner' "virtue".

81—Boreas (North-Wind) blows milder from his right cheek: N-W.

90—The rings around the "Point".

91—The sparks kept in motion together with the fiery ring whence they derived.

92—If one doubles the number progressively on each square of a chessboard (1, 2, 4, 8, etc.) enormous figures are reached.

95—To that "there"—h. e. to their proper position.

98-99—The smaller rings (and closer to the Point) are formed by the Seraphs and Cherubs who, with the Thrones (line 104) constitute the first Triad of Angelic Intelligences.

100—The "fastenings" are the bonds of love, the love which urges them to the utmost exertion to become at one with the "Point".

103-105—It probably means that these Spirits are called Thrones as they conclude the first Triad in which the Divine Aspect seats (is reproduced) more fully than in the rest.

107—Their happiness corresponds to their vision.

109-111—Celestial happiness is based on the "vision" which produces love; not on love as productive of vision: a theological question.

112-113—The extent of the vision depends on what has been deserved through divine grace operating with the creature's good will.

114—Down the nine Angelic choirs, each endowed with less of grace.

117—Which knows no winter. The Ram (Aries) during the winter is visible at night on turning against the sun's course.

118-122—The second Triad: Dominations, Virtues, Powers. Dante follows the classification of Dionysius the Aeropagite.

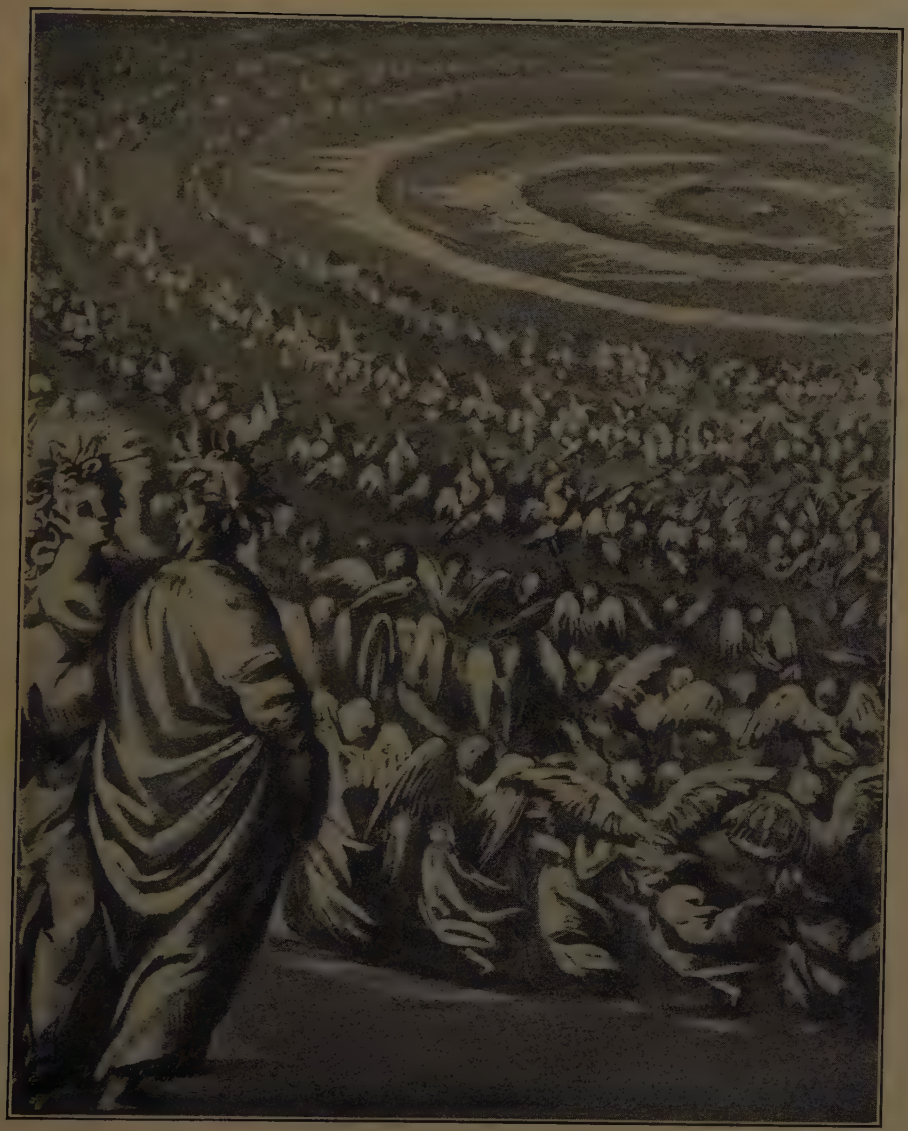
124-126—Third Triad: Principates, Archangels, Angels.

128—Each order of celestial Intelligences presides to one of the nine heavens.

131—The theological writer known as Dionysius the Aeropagite is a much discussed one as to his identity as well as to his authority. Probably of the second half of the V. century after Christ.

133—Pope Gregory the Great differed from Dionysius in his classification of Angels.

138—A legend had it that Paul, after his vision of the heavens, revealed those truths to Dionysius, supposed to have been Paul's disciple.



CANTO XXX

CANTO XXIX

ARGUMENT

In the ninth heaven. Beatrice dwells on the creation of the world and especially on the creation of Angels and on their nature. A bitter invective against foolish teachers and dishonest preachers.

When the two children of Latona stand
One 'neath the Ram, one 'neath the Scales: the blue
Horizon girding them with the same band,
Between the time the zenith holds the two
In even balance till both, having stepped
To other hemisphere, that zone undo—
That long, a-glow with smiles, in silence kept
Beatrice, while her fixéd eye was bound
Unto that Point which made my strength inept.
Then she began: "I ask not thee to sound
Thy wish; I speak, since that already I wist
Where "ubi" and "quando" of all things is found.
Not that He make of a new good acquist
(Which cannot be) but that His splendor could—
While shining forth—assert: "I do subsist",

16 In his eternity which doth exclude
Time's and all limits—at his will alone—
Th' Eternal Love himself in new loves shewed.

19 Neither had He before inertly shone
Since "after" or "before" cannot be thought
When on these waters was God' spirit blown.

22 Matter and form—both pure and jointly wrought—
Came to such act in which no fault had place
As from three-corded bow three darts are shot.

25 As into crystal, glass or amber, rays
A beam of light and from its reaching there
Allows—till its full being—no mid-space:

28 Thus the three-fold effect of its Seigneur
Without distinction—in its origin
At once did all into its being flare.

31 Order was concreate and woven in
The substances—those as "pure act" produced
Stood at the summit where all things begin.

34 Sheer potency was nethermost diffused:
Mid-way was potency conjoined with act
By such a bond that never may be loosed.

37 Jerome has writ for you of the long tract
Of centuries when Angels had been made
Before the other world grew thus compact;

40 And yet this truth is oft enough conveyed
By those who wrote inspired by Holy Ghost:
Look well, and this cannot thy sight evade.

43 By reason, too, this is in part disclosed:
That Motors for so long a time could be
Shorn of perfection, 'tis not well supposed.

CANTO XXIX

These loves how fashioned, thou canst clearly see—
And where and when: thus the three flames are spent
Which out of thy desire have leaped in thee.

E'en less than a score's count, was time's extent
Ere by a part of the Angelic band
The subject of your elements was rent.

A part remained, their art—as thou hast scanned—
Beginning here, and happy so they bide
That naught beside their circling they demand.

First reason of the fall came from the pride
Accursed, of him whom thou below hast seen
By all the weights of your world's matter tied.

Modest enough those thou see'st here have been
Their debt unto that Goodness to confess
Which to conceit so much had made them keen;

Wherefore their vision gained such loftiness
Through light of grace and merits of their own:
Now steadfast will and perfect they possess.

And this to thee I want, past doubting, known
That from the grace received such merits grow
As to embrace that gift the will is prone.

Thou canst on this assemblage now bestow
Some contemplation and no help dost need,
If has been gathered of my words the flow.

But since in earthly schools there are who read
And to angelic nature, memory
With understanding and will-power concede,

I shall speak further yet so that thou see
Pure truth: on earth with error so annealed
Due to your readers' words of sophistry.

These substances, once happy in the revealed
Aspect of God, have never turned aside
From it, and naught to it may be concealed.
Therefore no novel subject could divide
Their vision, and a "concept separate"
They lack—which is in memory implied.
Thus men though wakeful, dream whene'er they state
Such truths, as they believe—or disbelieve:
And this of guilt and shame bears greater weight.
To single path, below, ye do not cleave
In reasoning: the love and thought of vain
Display of words so doth your heart deceive.
Yet even that is born with less disdain
Up here, than when the Scripture is ignored
Or else its meaning suffers witless strain.
None reck the heavy cost of the blood poured
In sowing it, nor how beloved are those
Who, with humility, approach the Word.
Each strives to shine, and eloquent each grows
In his inventions: these fill the discourse
Of preachers who the Gospel should expose.
Some say the moon moved on a way retrorse
When Christ was suffering, and stood between:
Thus light fell not an earth down from its source.
Others, that in some way the light did screen
Itself; and hence from Spain to Ganges' tide—
As in Judea—the same eclipse was seen.
In Florence, Bindi and Lapi fewer reside
Than such-like fables which, in yearly brood,
Are hence and thence out of the pulpit cried.

CANTO XXIX

106 So the poor sheep who know no better food
Wind-filled come from the mead: it is no aid
That such a harm they have not understood.

109 Christ did not say unto his first brigade:
'Go forth and to the world preach vanities';
A foundation of truth for them He laid.

112 But from his cheeks resounded such advice
That they did fashion, from the Gospel heard,
Shield and spears to the fight—that Faith might rise.

115 And now they go with quips and mocking word
To sermonize; they ask but for one thing,
And swells the hood if plenty of laugh is stirred.

118 But in the peak such bird conceals his wing
That if the crowd saw it, they would see, too,
What sort it is this trustéd pardoning.

121 And yet, already on earth such madness grew,
To any Pardon will the people flock
Without a witness to attest it true.

124 Anthony's pig grows fat upon this muck,
And others, too, who are more shameless swine
Who pay with money in which no coin is struck.

127 But overlong we strayed: again incline
Thy eyes unto the rightful road ahead
So that our way may fit in time's confine.

130 This nature gradual so wide is spread
In numbers that to language do not yield
Nor are in mortal concept gatheréd.

133 And if thou look'st at what has been revealed,
See Daniel, whose mighty reckoning bears
Witness that a fixed number is concealed.

The Primal splendor which this nature shares
Is therein gathered in as many ways
As many are the flames with which It pairs;
And since to the reception of those rays
Love comes in sequence, in diverse degree
Sweetness of love in it doth cool or blaze.
See now the height, see the immensity
Of Power Eterne who breaks himself upon
Numberless mirrors which He caused to be,
Yet in himself He dwells, as ever, One."

Line 1-6—Sun and Moon (Apollo and Diana) are Latona's children. When (in the Spring equinox), the Sun being in Aries (Ram), the Moon in Libra (Scales), at sunset they are placed at the edge of the horizon, the horizon seems to gird them as a band and the "zenith" (highest point in middle heaven) to hold them as in balance. Between the time when they are so held and the time when they pass to a new hemispliere (the sun setting, the moon rising) thus undoing the zone formed by the horizon, but a moment intervenes.

11-12—"I know thy wish through my vision of God, in whom is found the "where" and the "when" of all things.

13—Not that God might gain some new happiness.

14-15—Only as an affirmation of his splendor.

16-18—The Poet gives the reason of creation: the love of God expanding itself in new creatures.

19-21—One cannot speak of "before" and "after" in respect to eternity: such concepts were possible only when God created the world.—Genesis speaks (I., 2) of "the Spirit of God which moved upon the face of the waters".

22-23—At the moment of creation "matter", "form" and a mixture of these two came to an actual existence without any flaw. And so—as immediately as a beam (25, 27) touches a shining object and resplends there—thus the triple effect of the Lord of creation (namely: Angels, heavens and the earth) came to its full being (28, 30) at the very moment of its origin.

CANTO XXIX

31, etc.—Into all substances (of that triple effect) an order was created at the same time; hence the Angels, being "pure act" (32)—unmixed with matter and free from "potency" or unrealized possibilities—stood at the summit of the Whole (33).

34—The Earth—or the elements thereof— was at the bottom of all since it was (at the moment of creation) a pure "potency" to be later developed. Between these two extremes is the mixed "act" and "potency": that is the Heavens and the human creatures: the bond (36) between Angels and Heavens and between soul and body can never be dissolved.

37-39—St. Jerome supposed that the Angels had been created long before the world, but (40) the Scriptures plainly indicate the fact of simultaneous creation.

44-45—It is hard to suppose that the Angelic Minds ("motors" of the Heavens) could remain so long deprived of their activity.

46-48—"These loves"—Angelic Intelligences—were fashioned as "pure act", in the Empyrean, at the time of universal creation: this answers the triple question in the Poet's desire.

49-51—Less time than it takes to count up to twenty remained all the Angels faithful. Then part of them rebelled and were precipitated to the center of the earth, rending the same earth, the "subject" or nucleus of the other mundane elements: fire, water, air.

52—Their art—as "motors" of the heavens.

55-57—The pride of Lucifer, whom Dante has seen in Hell at the center of the earth held by the force of gravitation.

58-60—The Angels remaining in Heaven were humble enough to aknowledge their debt to God.

65-66—The merits correspond to the proneness of the will to accept the gift of grace.

75—"Readers" or teachers (lecturers) of Theology.

79-81—Angels, properly, have no memory; their knowledge is all simultaneous and does not consist on "separate concepts", h. e. successive.

82-84—Men are dreaming when they state such truth (as for instance concerning the Angels' memory) whether they believe in what they state or not; the latter case implying greater shame.

92—In sowing the truth of Holy Scripture.

97-99—Retraced its course, to stand between the Sun and the earth and cause the eclipse at the time of Christ's death.

103—"Bindo" and "Lapo" were very common names in Florence.

106—The listeners to the sermons.

113—The early preachers of Christianity.

115—Wordly preachers of the time.

117—The hood worn by the preaching friars: it swells, with pride.

118—In the peak of the hood is the devil.

120—They would put less reliance in the pardons offered by the preachers.

122—Even when there is no proof that the Pardon offered is genuine.

124—St. Anthony is sometimes figured with a pig at his feet, symbol of the devil he had conquered. Out of this abuse of Pardoning, the devil (and the friars of Anthony's Order, the Franciscans) grow fat.

125-126—And so other religious, who give out false Pardons (Indulgences), similar to pieces of money not marked by any coin.

128—In the time allowed to the Poet's journey.

130-132—The Angels are so many that word or concept of man cannot cope with them.

133-135—In Daniel's vision (Daniel, VII., 10) the Angels are given as innumerable: a fixed number is not expressed.

136-138—The light of God in which the Angels (this nature) partecipate is manifested in them in as many ways as there are individual Angels.

139-142—Love follows the reception of the Divine light; this being different, love is cold or warm in the Angelic nature (in it) in different degree.

CANTO XXX

ARGUMENT

Beatrice and Dante enter the Empyrean. Vision of a river of light which is then transformed into the Rose of Paradise in which the Blessed have their seat. The Poet notices first the throne which is prepared for the Emperor of his hopes.

Haply at six thousand miles of distance shines
Bright the sixth hour, and this world's shadow bends
So that to level bed almost inclines,
When the mid-heaven (deepest to our sense)
Is growing such that of some stars the light
No longer down far as our depth resplends:
And as the sun's handmaid, in gleaming white,
Advances further, then all heaven's glows
Fade, one by one, till even the most bright.
Equally the triumphal host of those
E'er dancing 'round the Point 'gainst which I failed
(Enclosed it seems by what it doth enclose)
Little by little to my vision paled:
My eyes again to Beatrice were led
By love, since was all sight elsewhere curtailed.

If all that has so far of her been said
In but a single praise I could include
It were quite insufficient for this stead.

Beyond all modes by mortals understood
That beauty goes: and I in sooth believe
Its Maker only enjoys its plenitude.

But at this pass myself 'whelmed I perceive;
Ne'er comic bard or tragic strove to rise
—With less effect—up to his narrative;

Because, like sun upon most feeble eyes,
Thus my recalling of that most sweet smile
To memory itself its wonted power denies.

Since the first day I saw her face, the while
She lived on earth, until this sight of her,
Of strength to follow was not shorn my style;

After her beauty now I must forbear
From following: of it I cannot sing
Since past his limit artist does not dare.

Such then as I leave her to blazoning
Of better trump than mine (which must anon
Its arduous matter to a closing bring)

In act and voice like guide whose task is done,
She spoke: "Out of the body most extense
The heaven of sheer light we enter on.

Light intellectual which with Love blends:
Love of true Good, replete with joy most sheer:
Joy that all sweetness of the world trascends.

Both hosts of Paradise thou shalt see here
And one of them now in those traits bedecked
As at the final sentence shall appear."

As visive powers are dispersed and checked
By sudden lightning, when on human sight
The stronger objects fail of their effect,
Thus all 'round me shone forth a lively light
And by its splendor I was left enclosed
In such a veil that I was blinded quite.
"The Love that rests this heaven uppermost
Thus greets all that it gathers in its fold
To make the candle for its flame disposed."
No sooner this advice—so briefly told—
Had reached my mind that I was made to know
How past my powers I was now extolled.
And a new sight in me was kindled, so
Never a light could have such sheer a gleam
That my clear eyes could not sustain its glow.
And now I saw a light in form of stream
Flowing with splendor, by two meadows shored
Where Spring with wondrous flowers appeared to teem.
Out of the river living sparks up soared
And in the flowers, all 'round, themselves they threw
Like rubies which in golden cups are stored.
Then, as if ebrious with the scents, anew
They sank into the deep and wondrous gurge,
And for each one there dropped, one upward flew.
"The high desire which stirs such flame and urge
In thee, to know what here is visible,
Pleases me more, the more I see it surge.
But thou must drink the waters of that well
Before thy thirst, so great, thou canst appease."
The sun that lights my eyes, I heard so tell.

"The stream"—she added—"and the topazes
That come and go, the smiling meads portend
The truth like adumbrating prefaces.
These things are not so hard to comprehend:
On thy own failings must the blame be cast
Since not so high, as yet, thy eyes ascend."
There is no infant who would rush so fast
—His eyes upon his milk—if he should wake
Long after his accustomed hour is past,
As I did bend—of my dull eyes to make
Yet better mirrors—on those waves, in haste:
The waves from which the souls new powers take.
And the eaves of my eyes had barely a taste
Gained of that river, when—meseemed—its sheen
Not as straight length but as vast circle blazed.
As people who beneath a mask have been
Seem others than at first, soon as undrest
Of that false semblance which had formed their screen;
Thus, changed for me, the sparks and flowers expressed
A greater festival so that I saw
Both heaven's armies rendered manifest.
O God's own splendor, through which there I saw
The lofty triumph of truth's very reign,
Give me the power to limn what there I saw.
A light is given in that high domain
Which grants the Maker's sight unto the eyes
Of creatures that in Him their peace attain;
This light is there expanded circle-wise
And so far spread is its circumference
That of the sun it would exceed the size.

Naught is its semblance but light-effluence,
Striking the top of the First Moving Sphere
Which all its life and power gathers thence.
As cliff that makes a mirror of a clear
Pool at its feet, when flowers and green abound
The most—as if on its own grace to peer;
Thus over the reflecting light—all 'round—
I saw in many thousands seats arrayed
What of us there again its way has found.
If in its bosom doth the lowest grade
Gather such splendor, how wide-spread must be
This Rose, where stand its topmost leaves inlaid!
None of its width and height was lost to me
But all that joy I compassed, cognizant
Both of its quantity and quality.
Distance takes naught, nor aught may nearness grant
Up there; where God his rule direct bestows
The law of nature is not relevant.
Into the yellow of the eternal Rose
Which gradually expands, and scented praise
Sends to the Sun whose Spring e'er changeless glows—
As man who craves to speak and silent stays—
Drew me Beatrice and said: "Attently pore
On the White Robes and their so vast arrays.
The mighty circle of our city explore:
See how almost is filléd every stall
Since here are wanted but few people more.
To that great Throne which holds thy eyes in thrall,
(A crown already doth on it resplend)
Before thou dine within this nuptial hall

A soul—on earth imperial—shall ascend;
That of great Henry who the still adverse
Conduct of Italy shall come to mend.
Blind greediness that casts on you its curse
Belike a little child makes you to be
Who dies of hunger, yet sends off his nurse.
Shall then be prefect of the godly see
Such one who shall not walk with him apace
On open road, as well as covertly.
But God will not allow him many days
In holy office: he shall be cast off
Where Simon Magus for his merits stays,
To push him of Alagna in deeper through."

Line 1-6—Perhaps the sixth hour (midday) is about six thousand miles (from Italy, where it would about dawn) and the conical shadow of the earth is so inclined to be almost horizontal, when (3) the middle of the heaven (which to us on earth seems deepest—most far away) begins to clear up and some of the stars fade.

7—Dawn.

10-13—The Angelic rings began to fade.

20—The beauty of Beatrice.

38-39—Out of the ninth heaven—the largest of created bodies—we now enter the Empyrean.

43-45—The Angels and the Blessed: the latter appearing as in the flesh which they will resume on Judgment Day.

52-54—Divine Love thus stuns at first all who come into the Empyrean, to prepare them as a candle to receive its light.

73—Figuratively spoken: thou must first look upon that river (line 61, etc.).

75—Beatrice.

CANTO XXX

76, etc.—The vision of the river of light between flowery meadows is a preparation to the vision of the Rose of Paradise into which the river will change. The "topazes" of line 76 are the "living sparks" of line 64.

88—"The eaves of my eyes": the very edge.

94—The sparks were the Angels, the meadow flowers the Blesséd.

95-97-99—The repetition of the word in the rhyme is in the original, for obvious emphasis.

106-108—The light-effluence, which forms, as it were, the base of the Empyrean, touches the outside limit of the ninth heaven (Primum Mobile) giving to it all its life and power.

110—That is, in the Spring.

112—This ocean of light (see line 103 and 106) reflects (like a pool at the foot of a cliff reflects the same cliff) the structure of the Rose of Paradise which contains, arrayed in thousands of seats (see also Par. XXXI., 1) that part of mankind which has come back to God.

121—Vision is not hampered by distance, nor helped by nearness.

124—In the central part.

126—Praises to God, the Sun that knows no winter.

128—The "white Robes" are the Blesséd.

133—The Poet is looking at a vacant throne in the layers of the Rose.

135—Before thy death.

137—Henry VII on whom Dante had built his hopes.

142—Shall be Pope.

143—Clement V, who apparently ("on open road") seemed to walk with Henry VII, but covertly followed another direction.

146-148—Clement shall be cast into Hell (See Inf. XIX., 73-87) to push further down in his hole Boniface VIII, on whom was committed the outrage of Alagna (see Purg. XX., 86).

CANTO XXXI

ARGUMENT

In the Empyrean. The Poet is in the interior of the Rose of Paradise: the leaves thereof are the Blessed Spirits on their thrones. Angels fly around and up and down. Beatrice leaves Dante and sits on her throne. Saint Bernard appears, instead, at the Poet's side. Vision of the light of the Virgin Mary.

Thus in the form of a white-colored rose
The holy army spread before my sight—
The one whom Christ as bride on Calvary chose;—
The other one who sees, the while in flight,
And sings the glory of their Beloved One
—The bounty, too, which gave to them such height—
(As bees that, swarming, drop for once upon
The flowers, then again returning where
Their labor is into sweet flavor spun),
Descended in the spacious flower, fair
For wealth of many leaves; again then rose
Up where their love has its abode for e'er.
Their face was all like flame that lusty glows;
Golden their wings; the rest of such white hue
That passed the limit of all earthly snows.

When down the flower, from tier to tier, they flew
They offered of the peace and ardor sheer
Which, fanning their white flanks, within they drew.
The spreading—twixt the flower's highest tier
And what stood over—of such plenitude
Of wings, made view and splendor no less clear;
Because the light divine doth so intrude
The universe (as this has aptness for't)
That by no object it can be withstood.
That full of joy, that safe and changeless court
With the new people thronged and with the old,
Did to one aim, with sight and love, resort.
O thou who give'st them peace, O light three-fold
Sparkling upon their sight, a gleaming One,
Look down from heaven and our storm behold!
If the Barbarians from such lands whereon
Helice hovers, wheeling every day—
Enamored still—in closeness to her son,
When seeing Rome were 'whelmed into dismay
At her great works, when Lateran did rise
Above all things that mortals could survey—
I, rapt from human things to godly assize,
From time's demesne to the eternal strand,
From Florence to a people just and wise,
By what a wonder was I not unmanned!
Forsooth, through wonder and through joy as well
Mute and unhearing, I loved there to stand.
And as a pilgrim cheered as he doth dwell
[His vow absolved) in the long-yearned fane,
—And how it was, already he thinks to tell;

CANTO XXXI

Thus through the living light of that domain
I led my eyes and strolled from grade to grade,
Now up, now down, now circling 'round again.

I saw such aspects that to love persuade
Shining with their own smile and alien light,
And acts in every honesty arrayed.

How Paradise in general is dight
Already I had surveyed the form entire,
But stopping in no part to fix my sight.

And now I turned (moved by renewed desire)
Since on a doubt which kept my mind oppressed
I yearnéd from my Lady to enquire.

One thing I sought, another met my quest;
Beatrice I thought to see, I saw instead
An agéd man, robed like the glorious blest.

Upon his eyes and face was overspread
A joy benign; in him the charity
Of tender father plainly was imagéd.

And "Where is she?" such was my sudden cry.
And he: "So that thy yearnings' end thou gain
Moved me Beatrice from my place on high;

Upon the third of tiers thy vision train,
Down from the top, and there thou shalt see her
Upon the throne which her deserts obtain."

Answering not, I raised my eyes up there
And saw my Lady and the crown she wore
As she reflected the eternal glare.

From thunder's highest region there's no more
Distance down to the range of human eye
(Were one e'en sunk to deepest ocean floor)

As there Beatrice from my sight stood high.
But that was of no hindrance, since her traits,
Unfaded, came to me immediately.

—"O Lady in whom my hope invigorates,
And who, for my welfare, didst not despise
To leave thy foot's imprints within Hell's gates,

For all the things on which have gazed my eyes
From thy most lavish aid and thy puissance
The grace and strength in me I recognize.

From serfdom thou gave'st me deliverance
Leading through every way, through every shift
That could my steps on the long path advance.

Guard now in me thy most exalted gift,
So that my soul, by thee restored, yet may
Please thee when from its body set adrift."

Such was my prayer—and, so far away
As seemed, her smiling gaze on me she bent,
Then turned unto the fount of timeless day.

The holy Senior then: "To make th' intent
Of this thy journey reach perfection's height
(Wherefore by prayer and holy love I 'm sent)

Over this garden wing thy vision's flight;
Such view shall sharpen thy regard and spur
Thy climb yet higher to the godly light.

And Heaven's Queen all graces will confer
On us; She for whose love am all aflame
I, Bernard, her most faithful follower."

As one who haply from Croatia came
Yearning for our Veronica, and looks on
Ne'er sated, thinking of its ancient fame—

But speaks within his thought, while it is shown:
"Jesus, my Lord, true God, what here I see
Is it a semblance truly like your own?"
Such like, I gazed upon the charity
So bright, of him who in his wordly days
Had tasted of that peace, in ecstacy.
He then began again: "O child of grace,
This joyous state shall yet unknown remain
To thee, if at this depth thou keep'st thy gaze.
But let thy eyes the farthest tier attain
So that thou may'st perceive where sits the Queen
To whom devoutly subject is this reign."
Upward I gazed: as in the matutine
Horizon brightens all the orient
More than the rim where the sunset is seen,
Thus, with my eyes as if in an ascent
From vale to hill, I saw the edge extreme
More than the other front with light besprent.
And as on earth, where one looks for the team
Misled by Phaeton, doth the light increase
And over either side less is the gleam,
In such a way that oriflamme of peace
Shone brighter at midway, while on each side
Softened the flame in similar degrees.
And at that central part, with wings oped wide
Thousands of forms angelical, in way
And splendor each distinguished, I descried.
And smiling on their songs and on their play
A beauty there I saw, which filled the sight
Of all the other saints, with joyous ray.

Could I in telling reach to such a height
As in imagining, I would not dare
Touch on the very least of that delight.
Bernard, as he perceived that I did stare
Fixed and intent upon her warming fire
With such a love his eyes turned unto her
That mine gazed on with even more desire.

Line 3—The Church, here triumphant.
4—The army of the Angels.
12—Their love: God.
18—In their upward flight toward God.
20—The light of God "stood over".
26—The Blessed from the Old Dispensation and from the New (before and after Christ).
30—The unsettled conditions of the world.
31-33—The Barbarians from the North: in the Northern region turn—and are visible every day—the Constellations of Ursa Minor (Little Bear) and of Ursa Major (Great Bear). The nymph Helice had been changed into a star of Ursa Major and her son into a star of Ursa Minor.
35—Lateran: the imperial and then papal palace.
45—To tell, to his friends when back home.
51—Their own light and God's. Or, their own and the reflected light of the other Blesséd.
60—St. Bernard. See below (102).
78—Immediately, h. e. as if crossing no "medium", no intervening space.
88—The gift of Knowledge through which comes the Poet's salvation.
102—St. Bernard (XII century) Abbot of the Benedictine Abbey of Clairvaux (Burgundy). A great mystic, whose devotion to the Virgin Mary is expressed in many writings.

104, etc.—"Veronica": the "true image" of the Lord preserved on the cloth with which one of the women wiped the face of Jesus on the way to Calvary. The cloth, according to general belief, was once kept at St. Peter's in Rome.

111—Allusion to the mystical contemplations of St. Bernard.

120—More than the occidental rim of the horizon.

122-123—The extreme edge (the top) of the Rose was in a certain part (straight in front of the poet) brighter than the opposite edge.

124, etc.— As on earth, if one looks to where the sun is rising (Phaeton tried to guide the Sun's chariot, with disastrous results) one sees that part brighter than the rest of the horizon on either side.

127, etc.—At that edge of the Rose (see above, 122) the Poet saw like an oriflamme, a banner, shining bright while the light on either side diminished.

134—The beauty of the Virgin Mary.

CANTO XXXII

ARGUMENT

In the Empyrean. Bernard points out to Dante the main divisions of the Rose of Paradise and the most glorious personages having there their throne.

Fixed to his joy, the contemplating soul
Let from his lips this holy sermon pour,
Assuming willingly a doctor's role:
"The wound which Mary closed and overspread
With balm, the One so beauteous at her feet
Is she who opened it and pierced it sore.
'Mid those who have in the third tier their seat,
Beneath that one—by Beatrice's throne—
The ancient Rachel will thy vision meet.
Sarah, Rebecca, Judith and the one
Whose great-grandson sang "Miserere mei"
That God his sin repented might condone,
From step to step thus sit thou may'st survey
As I the proper name call at each row
While through the rose's leaves I make my way.

Far as the seventh tier, and still below
Therefrom, are women of the Jewish race
Whose line athwart all leaves a mark doth show.

For, as the faith in Christ held in two ways
Fixed its regard, these women are the wall
Whereat is parted this divine staircase.

Upon this part wherein the flower with all
Its leaves is ripened, those whose faith was aimed
Unto the future Savior, have their stall.

Upon the other, where some voids are framed
Within the semicircles, those abide
Whom faith in Christ, already come, inflamed.

And as the glorious throne—upon this side—
Of Heaven's Queen, and those on which they sit
Who are beneath, make such a great divide,

Thus mighty John's own throne stands opposite:
Who suffered desert, death by impious hands—
Ever a saint—and for two years, the Pit.

Beneath him Francis marks that severance,
Benedict and Augustine and the rest
From tier to tier, down to this lowest stance.

Note how God's high decree is here expressed,
Since Faith's two revelations shall complete,
In balanced way, this garden of the blest.

Know, too, that downward from the leaves that meet—
Midway—the length of the two straight partitions
No merits truly one's own afford a seat;

Merits of others do, with some conditions:
For these are spirits loosened from the shell
Of flesh, ere they could grow to true volitions.

Of this their aspect doth quite clearly tell,
And so the childish treble of their song
If dost to them look sharp and listen well.

Yet doubtest thou and doubts impede thy tongue:
But while such subtle thoughts thy mind occlude
I shall resolve thy knots, albeit strong.

Within this realm, in all its amplitude,
Cannot have place a casual happening
(Even as hunger, thirst, or saddened mood)

For by eternal law is set each thing
Which hereabout thou see'st, to proper gauge
Answering as to finger doth a ring.

Therefore this people called at early age
To the true life, have not without a cause
Among themselves a varied privilege.

The King from whom this reign celestial draws
Of such a love and of such joy the prize
That none could wish for aught beyond its laws,

All minds that He created in the guise
Of His own joy, at will endows with grace
In various ways: let the effect suffice.

And clearly and directly this displays
The Holy Scripture telling of that pair
Whose wrath, e'en in the womb, was felt to blaze.

Hence following the color of the hair
Of granted grace, thus the Highest Light
Makes them the garland of their worth to wear.

Of their own deeds, therefore, regardless quite,
Through varied ranks they here receive their meed
For having differed in the primal sight.

During the early centuries, to lead
Unto salvation spirits innocent
Only of the faith of parents there was need;
After the primal ages were all spent
Then of the males unto the plumes unstained
By circumcision needed power was lent.
But when the time of grace at last was gained
Except when perfectly baptized in Christ
The innocents below must be constrained.
But now look on the face which more to Christ
Is like: he only who becomes the knower
Of that clear light has strength to gaze on Christ."
And over her I saw such gladness pour
Brought by the holy minds—a wingéd host
Created such that on those heights may soar—
That what so far to me had been disclosed
Never held me so wondering, nor e'er
To me God's semblance was so much exposed.
And from the love who first descended there
AVE MARIA GRATIA PLENA—a cry
Came while he spread his wings in front of her.
And to that chant divine rang a reply
Up from that blesséd court, from every turn,
And on all faces shone new clarity.
"O holy father, thou who dost not spurn,
For me, to come this low and leave the place
So sweet, where is thy seat by lot eterne,
Who is that Angel whose so festive gaze
Is fixéd of our Queen into the eyes,
So enamored that he look like flaming braise?"

CANTO XXXII

Thus I invoked again the sermon wise
Of him who fairer shone with Mary's glow
As doth the star of morn with the sunrise.

"Whatever grace and gallantry may show
In angel or in soul"—the father spake—
"All is in him and we desire it so,

For it was he the chosen one to take
The palm to Mary, when mortality
The Son of God indued, for our own sake.

But as I shall proceed, let follow me
Thy eyes—the great patricians to review
Of this most just and pious Empery.

Those twain who sit up there, most happy shew
Since closest to Augusta they were raised:
Like roots they are from which this rose outgrew.

The one who leftward at her flank is placed
The ancient father is whose palate bold
Brought on the mortals such a bitter taste;

On the right flank thou see'st the father old
Of Holy Church: by Christ into his hands
The keys of this fair flower were gi'en to hold.

And he who saw, ere his deliverance
All the distresses of the beauteous bride
Won by the nails and by the piercing lance

Sits there by him; and by the other's side
The leader under whom was fed with manna
The ungrateful people, fickle, dour with pride.

Sitting to Peter opposite see Anna
So happy in her daughter's countenance:
Hardly she moves her eyes, singing Hosanna.

Against the greatest sire of men, there stands
Lucia, she by whom thy Lady was sent
When thou wert ruining with downward glance.
But since thy vision's time almost is spent
Here we shall cease, as doth a tailor wise
Who cuts the gown to fit the cloth's extent;
Let to the primal love be fixed our eyes
That looking unto Him thou pierce the fire
Blazing from him, far as thy power may rise.
But now indeed, lest haply thou retire
Moving thy wings, while thinking to progress
'Tis meet by prayer her favor to require:
Favor from her who may thy striving bless:
And that thy heart be with my words at one,
With thy affection follow my address."
And he began this holy orison.

Line 1—St. Bernard.

4-6—At the feet of Mary sits Eve who opened the wound (the original sin) closed by Mary as mother of the Redeemer. (The peculiar construction is kept to preserve the original's emphasis on "the wound").

8—Beneath Eve. Beatrice and Rachel are indicated in Inf. II., 102, as close associates.

10—Ruth, ancestress of King David.

13—Sitting thus one below the other.

19-21—The faith in Christ looked at Him as the Redeemer to come, and as the Redeemer who has come.

22—On the right side of the line formed by the Jewish women.

CANTO XXXII

26—The "semicircles": the Rose is divided vertically by two lines exactly opposed. One is the line of the Jewish women, the other is formed by the great Christian Saints (see line 31, etc.); hence these semicircles from one line to the other.

31—Opposite to Mary's throne is St. John the Baptist.

33—John died two years before Christ's death and was in the Limbo until freed by Christ's death.

36—To the bottom of the Rose, where the Poet was standing.

37-39—Each of the two revelations of faith—before and after the coming of Christ—furnishes half the number of the saved.

40-42—Another symmetry in the Dantean Rose is that downward from that tier (of the Rose's leaves) which cuts horizontally the two vertical partitions at their mid-length, all the places are occupied by children (who have no merits truly their own).

45—That is, before the age of reason.

49—The Poet was wondering how the souls of infants could enjoy a different degree of glory—a "varied privilege" (line 60).

52-55—In the Empyrean nothing fortuitous can have place, just as there cannot be hunger etc.

64-66—The reason of the different degrees of grace and then of glory is simply to be sought in the will of God—for men it must be enough to see the effect, even if the cause is beyond their reckoning.

67-70—In the story of Jacob and Esau of whom it is said (Genesis XXV, 22): "And the children struggled together in their mother's womb" is "displayed" the fact that more abundant grace may be given (as it was to Jacob) even to one of twin brothers.

70-73—The comparison is suggested by the red hair of Esau and the black of Jacob. It means: following the degree of grace freely granted by God, each soul is given a corresponding degree of glory.

75—In the degree of grace originally received.

76—According to Medieval chronology the "early centuries" run from Adam to Abraham.

80—Then—in Abraham's time—circumcision was instituted to give power (capacity for justification) to the "unstained plumes" (the innocence) of the males.

84—Below, in the Limbo.

85—The face of Mary.

89—Brought by the Angels. (See Par. XXXI., 16-18).

94—The Archangel Gabriel. (See Par. XXIII., 96 and below, 112 etc.).

113—In the scene of the Annunciation the Angel is represented with a palm in his hand.

116—"Patricians", or noble citizens.

118—"Up there": on the topmost row.

119—Augusta is the Virgin Mary: continuing the figure of Empire and Patricians.

122—Adam.

124—St. Peter, who holds the keys of heaven.

127-129—St. John the Evangelist, who witnessed before his death the trials of the early Church—the Bride won on the Cross.

130—By Peter.

131—Moses, sitting beside Adam.

133—At the left of John the Baptist (See above, 31).

136—Against—opposite to—Adam.

137—Lucia had sent Beatrice to Dante. (See Inf. II., 100-108).

145—Lest thou should'st go backward while thinking to advance.

CANTO XXXIII

ARGUMENT

Saint Bernard prays to the Blessed Virgin that the grace of the final Vision be granted to Dante. The Poet is then enabled to pierce into the supreme mysteries: the Trinity and Unity of God and the Incarnation of the God and the Son.

"O Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son;
Humble, and higher than created thing,
Point where th' Eternal Plan was fixéd on;
Thou art who didst to human nature bring
Such nobleness, its Maker did not spurn
To give Himself unto its fashioning.
Within thy womb anew the Love did burn
Whose warmth beneficent has caused this rose
To flower in this realm of peace eterne.
Thou art to us a torch of love that glows
Like sun at noon: to mortals in their plight
A fount of hope thou art that ceaseless flows.
Lady, so great thou art, such is thy might,
Whoever craves for grace and seeks not thee,
His hope, deprived of wings, attempts a flight.

Not only answers thy benignity
Those who have asked; oft, of the spoken word
Thou dost most liberally forestall the plea.
Pity is in thee, in thee misericord:
In thee magnificence; whate'er we call
Noble in creatures, all in thee is stored.
This man who from the lowest slough of all
The universe has come so far and gazed
Upon each mode of living spirital,
Now humbly begs of thee that he be graced
With such a power that e'en to greater height
Toward bliss supreme his vision may be raised.
And I who never burned for my own sight
As now for his I do, all prayers tend
To thee, and pray they may not be too slight,
So that thy prayers may strengthen him and rend
The clouds which his mortality surround
Unfolding thus to him the blissful end.
And after such a sight, O Queen God-crowned,
Thou who for all thy wishes hast puissance,
Again I pray—keep his affections sound.
Help him to conquer human circumstance:
Beatrice and so many of the blest
See how, with me, toward thee now fold their hands."
And now upon my advocate did rest
The eyes beloved by God and honored high:
Joy at the prayer devout they plainly expressed.
They gazed then on th' eternal radiancy
In which—we must believe—cannot be sent
With equal clearness, a created eye.

CANTO XXXIII

46 And at this time, since now was imminent
The goal of all desires, I felt the fire—
As it was meet—of my keen yearnings spent.

49 Bernard—that I should raise my vision higher
Nodded and smiled; but I had sought that view,
Of my own self fulfilling his desire.

52 Becoming pure, my sight was piercing through
Deeper and deeper in the timeless ray
Of Light excelse which in itself is true.

55 My vision passed, from henceforth, every way
Of human tongue which to such sight must yield—
And such excess doth memory dismay.

58 As one sees things which dreaming fancies build,
And—the dream past—the emotion still is felt
But memory to all the rest is sealed;

61 Such I; for to its end almost is spelt
My vision, while 'tis yet distilled upon
My heart the sweetness that from it has welled.

64 Thus is dissolved the snow beneath the sun;
Thus on light leaves the Sibyl's oracle
Was by the wind disperséd here and yon.

67 O Light Supreme, who dost so highly excel
All mortal concepts, grant my mind a trace
Of that which then to me was visible.

70 And to my tongue give of such power the grace
That of thy glory a spark at least I leave
To those whom earth shall bear in future days.

73 If aught of it my memory can retrieve
And voice it in my song (were it a mite)
More of thy wonders mortals will conceive.

I think I had been wholly lost (so bright
The living ray which did my vision meet)
Had I from it turnéd aside my sight.

And I recall that, fearing that defeat,
My gaze grew bolder that keen ray to bear
Until it joined with the glory infinite.

O grace abundant, through which I did dare
To cast my sight into the light eterne
Exhausting all that I found visive there!

And gathered in its depth I did discern
—In but one tome, love-bound—all that we see
Throughout the Whole, whatever page we turn.

Accident, substance and each property
Thereof, together in such way conflated
That what I say naught but a flash can be.

Methinks that of this knot I contemplated
The universal form, since with each word
I say of this, my joy I feel dilated.

Yet only one point made more my memory blurred
Than five and twenty centuries the emprise
When Argo's shadow Neptune's wonder stirred.

Thus all my mind enraptured stood: its eyes
Held fixéd and unswerving and intent,
More ardent e'er, to look and to cognize.

Such one becomes in that envelopment
That to a turning thence for other lure
It is impossible e'er to consent,

Because the Good our will aims to procure
All there is held; outside of it is found
Defective what in it is whole and pure.

CANTO XXXIII

And now my words shall even shorter sound
Than babe's who wets his tongue upon the breast—
Even with what is still to memory bound.

A simple semblance only was manifest
(Since nothing there is old and nothing new)
Within the light where was my gaze addressed.

But keen yet more and more my vision grew
The while I gazed; my changing made appear
That single semblance altered in my view.

In that exalted light's profound and clear
Subsistence, to my eyes three circles gleamed
Of varied hue but closing equal sphere.

One from another did reflect and seemed
Iris from Iris: fire-like the third ring
Equally breathed hence and thence, I deemed.

How scant and feeble are my words to sing
My concept: this—to what I there descried—
For words of "smallness" sends me beggaring.

O light eternal who sole in thee dost bide,
Sole know'st thyself: thus knowing and self-known
Thou bring'st forth joyful love in inward tide!

That circulation which in Thee there shone
Conceived within, like light that comes from light,
After my eyes had gazed a while thereon,

Within itself and of one color quite
Bore—so methought—our human form designed,
Wherefore all into that I fixed my sight.

As the geometer who with all his mind
Strives for the circle's measure, gives great thought,
But the principle needed fails to find:

Thus in that novel sight my wit was caught.
I yearned to see how did the image fit
Into the circle, how in it 'twas wrought;
But my own plumage this would not permit,
Had not then struck my mind a radiance
Which brought fulfilment of desire with it.
Here failed my lofty phantasy's puissance,
While turned my will and my desire, as even
As doth a wheel which moves all points at once,
The Love which sun and stars moves in the heaven.

Line 3—The plan of Redemption was based on Mary, as the Redeemer's Mother.

6—Becoming a man, "fashioned" according to human nature.

10—To us, in Paradise.

28—Never was I eager for my celestial vision as, etc.

41—The eyes of Mary.

43-45—No eye of creature may see so deep into the eternal radiancy of God as the eye of Mary.

65—The Sibyl wrote at times her responses on leaves: it was hard to piece together her meaning.

79—Fearing that, turning aside, my sight would be lost altogether.

91—The "knot" is the combining of accident substance, etc., held together by the "universal form".

94—One point of time after the vision blurred the memory of it more than the passing of twenty-five centuries has blurred the memory of the expedition of the Argonauts when Neptune wondered at the shadow cast by their boat, called Argo.

109—"A simple semblance", not a changeable one.

113—The changing—or the enlarged capacity—of the Poet's sight was the reason for his seeing any alteration in the Light of God. The Light itself did not change.

115-120—The Holy Trinity.

CANTO XXXIII

121-123—My words are scant for my concept—and my concept (in comparison to what I saw) is so small that I am at a loss for words expressing its smallness.

127-128—That circle which in the triple ring of light appeared conceived and reflected (the Second Person of the Trinity).

131—The humanity of Christ.

133-135—A geometer trying to find the relation between square and circle.

140—An overwhelming divine illumination that permitted the Poet to see the relation of humanity and divinity—"the image fitting the circle" (above, 137, 138).

142, etc.—The Love which moves the heavens now made my will and my desire turn evenly as all parts in a wheel: thus the supreme illumination and the supreme wisdom was reached.

233
220
708

ERRATA — CORRIGE

INFERNO—

I (Notes) Line 54	Line 60
V, 10 place	the place
IX, 27 Juda's	Judas'
XX, 114 (change)	
Thou know'st, since naught of if dost thou forget.	
XXII, 109 (change to 106)	
Then Ciriatto	And then Cagnazzo
XXII, 112, 115, 118	109, 112, 115
XXII, (Insert 118, 120)	
Now, reader, a new trickery shall be seen:	
Unto the other side each turned his glance,	
He first, who most averse to that had been.	
XXV, 117 half sprung	have sprung
XXVI, 65 of	of a
138 vessels	vessel
XXIX, 129 (change)	
Damned Minos' sentence, ne'er by error swayed.	
XXX, 128 leak	lick

PURGATORY—

II, 23 such thing	such flare
IV, 87 than	of
XXI, 97 thy Poem	th' Aeneid
XXV, 32 Enfold	Unfold

PARADISE—

II, 64 eight	eighth
III, 18 Than	To
VI, 121 living justice	the living justice
IX, 135 Studies	Studied
XI, 17 began anew	anew began
XVII, 67 soon be shown	soon enough be shown
81 this circles	these circles
120 this times	this time
XXIV, 111 but now	though now

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